WORKPLACE ORGANISATION AMONGST LOCAL AUTHORITY MANUAL WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers. The first part of the work reviews research into workplace organization and, in stressing the rather narrow focus of such research, notes the relative absence of empirical data on newly-formed steward organizations in the public and private service sectors. A discussion of local authority industrial relations indicates that this sphere provides both an opportunity to increase the stock of knowledge on these newer organizations and a chance to analyse the structure and development of organization in a very different employment context.

An analytical framework is developed which seeks to accommodate the distinctive features of the local authority employment context. The bulk of the study is then devoted to the application of this framework to four different local authorities. An attempt is made to distinguish variations in organizations both within the authorities, according to occupation, and between authorities, according to the unity or fragmentation displayed across the whole of the manual workforce.

The explanation of the variations revolves around the constraints placed upon union and management behaviour by the structure of different types of local authority. Three structural features are seen to have a particularly powerful influence upon workplace organizations: functions performed, geographical size and urban-rural balance. While these features do not preclude a degree of independent union and management action, they set important limits to such action and enable fundamental distinctions to be made in the character of workplace organization between different types of authority.

This analysis of workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers provides a basis for the development of a model of workplace organization founded upon completely different assumptions to the previously dominant 'engineering paradigm'. It is suggested that this new model may help in an understanding of workplace organization developing in industries sharing similar conditions of work with local government. Even in radically different industries, the model prompts recognition of the need to focus upon the occupational composition and geographical disposition of a workforce in analysis of workplace organization.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

DECLARATION

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.C.C.	Association of County Councils
A.D.C.	Association of District Councils
A.M.A.	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
A.M.M.A.	Assistant Masters' and Mistresses' Association
B.D.C.	Branch District Committee
B.L.C.	Birmingham Liaison Committee
C.R.D.	County Repair Depot
C.O.H.S.E.	Confederation of Health Service Employees
D.T.C.S.	Directorate of Technical and Contract Services
D.C.C.	Dorset County Council
J.C.C.	Joint Consultative Committee
J.T.U.L.C.	Joint Trade Union Liaison Committee
J.N.C.	Joint Negotiating Committee
J.S.S.C.	Joint Shop Stewards' Committee
J.U.B.C.	Joint Union Birmingham Committee
J.W.C.	Joint Works Committee
L.A.C.S.A.B.	Local Authorities' Conditions of Service Advisory Board
N.U.A.A.W.	National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers
N.U.P.E.	National Union of Public Employees
N.A.L.G.O.	National and Local Government Officers' Association
N.A.T.F.H.E.	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
N.A.H.T.	National Association of Head Teachers
S.H.A.	Secondary Heads' Association
T.G.W.U.	Transport and General Workers' Union
U.M.A.	Union Membership Agreement

PREFACE

This study is concerned with workplace trade union organization amongst local authority manual workers. Fifteen or twenty years ago, such a study would have seemed an unlikely topic for a doctoral student in industrial relations. At that time, the interest of academics and public policy makers had only just been directed towards the role of shop stewards in parts of the private manufacturing sector. Research was initiated that would lead, in the next decade, to a substantial analytical and empirical focus on workplace industrial relations. The academic explanations and the policy changes encouraged by governments and implemented by managers and trade union officials varied in their emphasis, but they were usually directed at the alleged problems of manufacturing industry, especially in engineering and motor vehicles.

Two decades ago, the relatively peaceful and stable industrial relations procedures and practices of local authorities aroused little interest amongst academics and policy makers. A few descriptive accounts of national collective bargaining machinery and the history and growth of individual trade unions had been produced but workplace trade union organization was assumed to be non-existent or unimportant. Until the national dispute of 1970, few people were probably aware that the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Services (Manual Workers) was the largest bargaining unit in Britain, and that the million workers whose terms and conditions it negotiated included a vast array of occupational groups employed as refuse collectors, road sweepers, gardeners, school caretakers, cooks, cleaners, home helps and grave diggers and many others engaged in mainly unskilled tasks associated with local authority services.

The visibility of local government industrial relations increased

throughout the 1970s, as sporadic industrial conflict followed the national wage campaigns of more confident trade unions and, later in the decade, expenditure restraint began to make an impact on most parts of the public service sector. The part played by local authority manual workers in the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1978-79 provided an illustration of some of the more important developments of previous years. It also provided the point of departure for this study.

In the summer of 1979, a number of post graduate students at Warwick University investigated the industrial relations procedures and practices of different local authorities. My case study of the London Borough of Richmond focused on the pattern of trade union organization and the joint consultative and bargaining arrangements that had developed within the authority. It soon became apparent that the conflict which had occurred earlier in the year, and the pattern of workplace trade union organization generally, could be understood only if the distinctive features of local authority employment were adequately identified and analysed. For example, compared with most parts of manufacturing industry, the labour force was fragmented into occupationally diverse and geographically scattered groups raising important questions about the extent and nature of workplace organization. Moreover, in trying to assess the impact of management on trade union organization and behaviour it was clear that the council's party political balance and the relationship between elected councillors and their principal officials were important factors that had no counterpart outside the local government sector.

The preliminary study led to the first and major objective of the extended research; that is, to provide sufficiently detailed empirical data from which an accurate picture of workplace trade union organization amongst local authority manual workers could be assembled. The second main objective

was to provide an explanation of the development of workplace organization that took account of variations both within different parts of the local government sector, and between local government as a whole and the private manufacturing sector.

Chapter One of the study reviews industrial relations literature on workplace organization, identifying particular spheres of interest and the theoretical models that have been proposed. Chapter Two consideres the changes in the local government industrial relations context possibly related to the emergence of forms of workplace organization amongst manual workers. Chapter Three develops an analytical framework for the study of workplace trade union organization in the local government sector. The four subsequent chapters present the findings from research work into four individual case study authorities. The final cross-analysis chapter uses the empirical data from the four case studies, supplemented by information from a range of other authorities, to provide an explanation of the character of workplace trade union organization amongst local authority manual workers.

CHAPTER 1

THE ANALYSIS OF WORKPLACE ORGANIZATION

The origins of Workplace Organization

Analysis of the creation and initial development of workplace organization has tended to revolve around the concept of the work group. This particular unit has been viewed as the building block for such organization. Thus Clegg, in response to his own question, 'Why workplace organization at all?', suggests; 'One possible reply is that industry brings men and women together, they naturally associate in groups, and it is natural that these groups should try to exercise some control over their working conditions' (1979:53). Certainly this is only a 'suggested reply' and Clegg recognizes the greater complexities inherent in the development of organization, noting that 'there is plenty of evidence of groups formed who do not attempt to regulate industrial relations' (p54). Even this qualification, however, accepts the work group as a given and pivotal where workplace organization does indeed develop.

It is possible to identify from Clegg's statement five distinct phases leading to the creation of workplace organization: industry bringing men and women together; their association in groups; the development amongst them of common interest and objectives in relation to their work; action by these groups on the basis of such objectives seeking to regulate their terms and conditions of employment; and, finally, the emergence of workplace organization as these groups come to organize amongst themselves, often, but not necessarily, within trade union structures.

A significant body of literature focusing on the sociology of the work group covers the first four phases distinguished above. For example, the studies of Sayles (1958), tracing the evolution of different types of

work groups and their mode of 'conflict-bahaviour', and of Kuhn (1961), concerned with work group bargaining behavior, represent pioneering studies into workplace relations. The present study is not primarily concerned with the work group outside of, and independent from, more broadly based workplace organization developed within trade union structures. However, some consideration of the work group as a unit from which this broader based organization is generally seen to emerge is still felt to be of some value.

Despite the considerable research undertaken which focuses specifically upon work group activity, criticism has been levelled at the lack of precision with which the term has been used. Fox (1971) and Hill (1974) in particular, have noted the highly ambiguous usage of the work group concept. Fox has identified four often overlapping usages of the term. Thus he notes:

> It may refer to a friendship clique...Second...a subordinate group defined by having a common supervisor. Third there is the task group of employees who must collaborate if a given job is to be accomplished. Finally comes the interest group composed of employees (who may be dispersed throughout the organization) who share common work interest and objectives (p113).

The work groups identified here are clearly not mutually exclusive. Any given worker may well belong to one or more of the three primary groups identified: the friendship group, subordinate group and task group. Indeed, membership of the latter two groups will be inevitable for employees within most work situations whether the employees themselves recognize it or not. The last usage of the term identified, however, is qualitively different from the other three. It is not a passive category, for interest group formation is dependent upon a consciousness of belonging and the generation and pursuit of common aims.

The formation of interest groups may well be crucial to the development of workplace organization, yet the usage of the term as identified above by Fox is too vague to be of any analytical value. Any one of the three primary groups identified or a combination of them may evolve into an interest group. However, the term 'interest group' may equally refer to organization more broadly based on the total workplace. Fox explicitly leaves open this possibility noting, 'the employees... may be dispersed throughout the organization'.

Fox's list of usages is not exhaustive and tends to overlook the different types of 'interest groups' that might arise. The process noted above leading to the emergence of workplace organization clearly forsees group activity initially within, not on the basis, of the workplace. Such activity is seen as prior to the creation of an integrated workplace organization. A term is therefore needed to distingush between interest groups operating within the workplace on the basis of narrowly defined objectives, and the broader interest group based on the total workplace. The term 'regulator' work group may be of use in referring to such lower level groups. These groups should be viewed as the intermediary stage between spontaneous and inevitable attachment to a primary group and the creation of an integrated organization.

The 'regulator' work group is crucial to past approaches adopted to analyse the emergence of workplace organization. The shop steward is seen very much as the representative of the self-regulating work group. This group may be based upon a primary group or, as Goodman and Whittingham (1973:89) have suggested, upon a number of primary groups. The steward emerges from within the 'regulator' work group and is solely responsible to it, rather than being imposed by and responsible to any external forces.

For example, although district committees of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers at the turn of the century began to appoint delegates in the shop to facilitate the enforcement of craft rules, as Clegg points out, 'the unforeseen consequence of the (1889 union-engineering employers) agreement was a widening of the scope for steward action' (1979:21). This was activity on behalf of specific groups within the shop and relatively independent from district committees.

Although the shop steward has been seen primarily as a work group representative, the closeness of the relationship between steward and work group members has been questioned. In one of the earliest attempts to systematically relate steward behaviour to work group pressures, Goodman and Whittingham stress that 'the importance of group activity can be exaggerated' (1973:90). Of nineteen stewards from six different factories studied 'fifteen were leaders of work groups, and were subject to little pressure from those they represented' (p90). The Goodman and Whittingham study is significant in pointing to the possible variation in the relationship between stewards and their constituents, a theme later pursued by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977). Yet the existence of work groups and the development of steward constituencies based upon them still remains unchallenged.

The assumptions of work group formation and the pivotal role played by such groups in the development of workplace organization have not been subjected to detailed criticism. With so many studies of workplace organization conducted within the factory environment, such assumptions have seemed entirely valid. There is little reason why they should have come under detailed scrutiny. However, it is by no means 'natural' or 'inevitable' that groups should form within all work situations or that

they should form the basis of steward representation. Hill during his research into the docks, for example, found that 'stewards are not work group representatives, since they are elected by all workers in a firm and not by specific groups' (1974:266).

Both work group formation and activity are dependent upon a range of variables and factors. In developing an analytical framework to study work groups, Hill (1974) draws together and structures a number of the key variables identified by previous researchers. Thus attention is drawn to the importance of four key variables: structural conditions, the extent of worker consciousness, the nature of worker consciousness and the power position of workers. The structural variable is seen as crucial in influencing the formation of any group and particularly self-regulating work groups. Of the structural factors, the production system, 'the physical disposition of production, the lay-out of the production system which results from both the nature of the technology used and the division of labour imposed by management' (p217), is seen as especially important. Once formed, the ability and willingness of work groups to regulate their terms and conditions and the manner in which they go about it are influenced by the latter three variables. These three variables direct attention to a consideration of such factors as workers' attitudes and values, their particular orientations to work; these, in turn, are related to management structure and strategies, the social structure outside the workplace and the labour and product markets.

The value of Hill's framework lies in the identification of a comprehensive range of factors that may influence work group formation and activity and in the implication that such groups might not form at all. Hill's framework is not, however, explicitly concerned with the

transition from 'regulator' work group to integrated workplace organization, although his work is a useful reminder that this final transition is also not an inevitability. Thus the creation of an integrated workplace organization may, in certain instances, be interpreted as a form of work group activity. This transition to workplace organization may, however, be a more complex process and is certainly worthy of more detailed consideration.

Often, although not invariably, the development of workplace organization results from the integration of the fragmented 'regulator' work groups into the unifying structures of the union. Hill's framework, in overlooking the influence of union structures, strategies and policies, is therefore of restricted value in this respect. Nevertheless, it remains important to recognize that workplace organization may develop outside or prior to trade union initiatives, possibly, but again not necessarily, being brought into formal union structures at a later date.

In conclusion, it needs to be stressed that the process generally assumed to lead to the development of workplace organization has usually derived from observation of the emergence of such organization within a factory environment. The five phases of this process have therefore been seen to 'logically' and 'naturally' follow upon one another in an ordered sequence. The 'inevitability' of these phases has, however, been called into question. It is hoped that a consideration of the creation of workplace organization outside the confines of the factory environment may provide examples of alternative developmental processes.

Shop Steward Organization

It is possible to distinguish between two different forms of

research into the character of steward organization. The first has relied predominantly upon survey techniques and has primarily concentrated upon structure. Thus, attempts have been made to assess the nature of steward constituencies, their size, the extent of steward continuity, the existence of steward hierarchies and regular forms of interaction[1]. The quality and nature of these surveys varies significantly. For example, differences are apparent in the range of structural features examined, in the industries covered and the actors questioned. For the purpose of this section two surveys, in particular, are considered in some detail: those conducted by Brown, Ebsworth and Terry (1978) and by members of the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University (1981)[2]. These two surveys sought to correlate structural features of steward organization with various potentially influential variables on the premise that certain earlier surveys, 'provided statistically representative data on a wide range of aspects of stewards and their roles, mostly in the form of straight description with relatively few attempts to interrelate variables' (Brown et al, 1978:139).

The second type of research into steward organization has taken the form of a series of case studies[3]. Again the quality of the case study work has varied significantly; different researchers pursuing their subject areas with varying degrees of rigour. Attention in this section, however, will focus primarily upon the case study undertaken by Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977). The analytical framework adopted by the researchers and the comprehensive manner with which it was applied mark this study out as being of particular interest. Based upon the assumption that any workplace organization once created is subject to various pressures for change, their approach dictates that attention should focus upon the broad and continual range of processes needed to maintain that organization.

Focusing upon very similar features of steward organization, both the Brown et al and Warwick surveys stressed the importance of management influence upon their development. Establishment size and levels of bargaining, both related to management structure and behaviour, were viewed as being of particular significance. Brown et al, for example, identifying a median figure of 39 for steward constituencies[4], found that constituency size tended to rise the larger the workforce. The importance of establishment size was again emphasized in the assessment of steward continuity. Seeking to gauge the 'core of experience' within the steward body using the 'proportion (of stewards) with more than four years experience' as their principal indicator, Brown et al found a critical size of workplace of 500. In workplaces of less than 500 employees there was a significant tendency for stewards to have less continuity of service.

This theme continued when attention was turned towards steward hierarchies and steward interaction. Both studies found associations between the size of the steward body and the existence of senior stewards and the holding of regular steward meetings. The Warwick Survey in analysing the emergence of the full time steward stressed the importance of bargaining levels and directly referred to the similarity between its findings and those of Brown et al. Thus,

> full time stewards were considerably more common allowing for workforce size where wages were fixed by single rather than multi employer bargaining...consistent with the argument of Brown, Ebsworth and Terry that full time stewards have to a large extent come into being through managerial initiative (p63).

Similar findings produced closely related conclusions. Brown et al assert that 'the size of the workforce appears to have a powerful influence

upon the nature of shop steward organization' and 'that once establishment size has been taken into account there is little difference in the complexity of steward organization between engineering and the rest of manufacturing' (p154). This view is echoed in the Warwick survey; 'the survey reveals considerable similarity between industries in the state of steward organization once the effect of workforce is allowed for' (pp78-79).

On a more general level what stands out from both studies is the emphasis placed on management as an influence upon steward organization. The Warwick survey notes that, 'Throughout manufacturing but particularly where steward organization has arisen ready made, management has had a powerful influence in shaping what was previously independent' (p79). Whilst Brown et al declare that, 'The explanation will not approach completion...until we have a better understanding of management' (p156).

The two surveys provide a clear picture of the features of steward organization which have interested researchers in the past. They also give a clear indication of the types of variables which may influence the character of these features. If the surveys can be criticized, it is not so much on the validity of their substantive findings as on their status and generality. The Warwick survey was restricted solely to the private manufacturing sector in an explicit attempt to compare recently developed steward organization with organization identified by the Donovan Commission (1968). Brown et al, in contrast, sought to include a number of public service industries within their survey sample but the key findings, particularly those related to workforce size, primarily relate to those establishments outside of the public service sector.

These two projects also fail to give any indication of the processes

by which influential variables come to affect features of steward organization. This limitation is largely inherent in the survey technique. The two surveys certainly go beyond the purely descriptive, providing useful correlations, but influential variables remain rather mechanically applied to features of steward organization. Brown, editing the Warwick Survey, and clearly aware of this, notes that, 'Any survey must be interpreted in conjunction with observation, case studies and other empirical techniques' (p3).

Studies employing these other empirical techniques can be identified but the extent to which they have provided a clearer understanding of processes leading to the development of steward organization has varied. Case studies have been confined primarily to the private manufacturing sector and have employed different research techniques and analytical frameworks. Denyon (1973) and Nichols and Armstrong (1976), focusing respectively upon a car and a chemical plant, produced rather impressionistic, polemical studies which suggested the importance of worker perceptions in mediating between influential structural variables and the development of steward organization. The contrast between these studies and that undertaken by Nicholson, Ursell and Blyton (1981) could not have been greater. Focusing upon 'democracy' within a NALGO branch in Sheffield, these authors constructed a complex behavioural model, the testing of which required the use of a wide range of research techniques. Interest in this section is, however, concentrated upon the Bitstone et al study. This piece of work was also based upon a sophisticated analytical framework rigorously applied. It was a framework which, as suggested above, encouraged consideration of the continual range of processes taking place within steward organization.

The assumption that any pattern of behaviour constituting a workplace organization will be subject to the pressures of change led Batstone et al to stress the need for a continual 'negotiation of order' undertaken by members of that organization. The manner in which such 'negotiation of order' is undertaken and the outcome of it reflects the distribution of power and influence within the workplace organization. The three particular aspects of power considered were the dominant ideology, the initiation of issues and control of them through procedural mechanisms, and the outcome of such decision-making processes.

Consideration of ideologies is based upon an assessment of steward behaviour in terms of whether the steward acts as a 'delegate' or a 'representative' and whether his pursuit of union principles is 'high' or 'low'. The particular distinction between stewards which Batstone et al find to be of significance in their engineering plant is that between the 'populist' steward and the 'leader' steward, with the former being more common amongst white collar workers, the latter amongst shop floor workers. Particular emphasis is given by Batstone et al to steward 'networks of contact' in explaining the development of different types of steward, with the 'leader' steward deeply involved in such networks gaining support and other resources from those who comprise it. These resources are especially forthcoming from a group of senior stewards, the 'quasi-elite', who are 'guardians of the norms of leadership'. Differences in manifestations of power are explained in terms of differences in resources available to stewards and constraints upon them. Such resources and constraints will derive, as suggested, from the steward body itself and also from the membership and from management, particularly where a bargaining relationship has been established.

The criticism levelled at the study has tended to focus upon the classification of steward types. Willman (1980:40-41), in particular, stresses that the horizontal 'representative-delegate' axis fails to adopt a sufficiently flexible issue specific perspective, limiting its ability to recognize the possibility that steward behaviour may vary in relation to particular issues. In developing a vertical axis, based on pursuit of union principles, Willman notes the absence of any discussion on the manner in which such principles might structure steward behaviour in relation to specific issues like pay. A further question raised by the study stems from the importance attached to 'networks of contact' in the maintenance of organization. How are organization maintained, if indeed they develop, where contact between workers and stewards in the workplace is problematical? This is a particularly pertinent question given the focus of attention in this study.

In conclusion, although a very crude distinction has been made between research using survey and case study techniques, both types of work have provided useful, if slightly different sources of data on steward organization. The Brown et al and Warwick surveys give an indication of the variables influencing steward organization across a wide range of establishments and stress the importance of management structure and behaviour. Of the case studies, that undertaken by Batstone et al gives a particularly striking reminder of the continual processes needed to maintain organization and serves as a corrective to the deterministic slant of the former two surveys. The most general criticism that can be levelled at research into steward organization is that it has either concentrated exclusively upon the private manufacturing sector or, if it has broadened its focus of attention, has not been prepared to take sufficient account of features of the employment context

which differ from those within that sector.

Shop Steward Behaviour

The distinction between steward organization and steward behaviour should not be viewed as a precise analytical distinction, but one designed primarily to focus attention upon features of workplace organization which have been researched as self-contained areas of interest. More specifically, a number of studies have focused upon the functions performed by stewards, the behaviour of stewards vis-a-vis union structures and figures outside the workplace, and the behaviour of workers and stewards as manifested in forms of industrial action.

A number of the early studies into workplace organization sought to distinguish and analyse the functions performed by stewards. The Donovan Commission stimulated considerable work within this area. The research paper prepared by McCarthy (1966) focused specifically on the role of the steward, providing an exhaustive list of steward functions and a wide range of variables influencing the stewards ability to perform them. In a second research paper, McCarthy and Parker (1968) presented findings from an extensive survey allowing an assessment of the significance attached to the different steward functions.

McCarthy distinguished between functions performed by the steward in the workplace and usually involving a direct relationship with management or members, and those functions carried out specifically on behalf of the union. Within the workplace the steward is involved in consultation and in the handling of member grievances and problems, but particular emphasis was given to the steward's negotiating function. Similarly, in the Goodman and Whittingham study, negotiation was the 'only function regarded

as essential' (1973:4) to the definition of steward adopted[5]. The importance of the stewards bargaining role has been confirmed by empirical data collected in a number of surveys. Both the Clegg, Killick and Adams (1961) survey and the McCarthy and Parker survey revealed the considerable amount of time devoted by many stewards to this particular activity. In relation to union activities, McCarthy stresses steward involvement in recruitment and maintenance of membership, in communicating and cementing union loyalties and in passing on worker grievances to full time union officials where procedure dictates this course of action.

The steward's ability to perform these different functions is dependent upon a range of related but analytically distinct factors. Many of the factors distinguished by McCarthy were discussed when looking at work group behaviour. For example, McCarthy stresses the significance of the 'socio-technical system' and employer, union and worker attitudes. Particular emphasis is, however, placed upon labour market conditions and the wage structure. Initial work into steward behaviour was undertaken in the immediate post-war decades when buoyant labour market conditions and the widespread operation of payment-by-result in the private manufacturing sector had enhanced opportunities for steward activities.

It was this enhancement in the opportunities for steward activity which also focused attention upon the relationship between stewards and the union outside the workplace. As already noted, it was the relaxation of outside union control in the engineering industry which contributed to the initial development of steward organization. More significant, perhaps was the identification of steward 'autonomy' at the workplace level as a factor contributing to the creation of the 'informal' system of industrial relations undermining the effectiveness of the 'formal' system of multi-

employer bargaining in the 1960s (Flanders, 1965; Donovan, 1968). It was not, however, until the work of Boraston, Clegg and Rimmer (1975) that a systematic attempt was made to analyse the independence and dependence of stewards by seeking to operationalize such concepts and apply them to a wide range of industries.

Boraston et al found that the most important relationship between stewards and the union external to the workplace was between full time union officials (FTOs) or, less frequently, with lay officers substituting for the FTO. They operationalize the concepts of 'dependence' and 'independence' by looking at who 'dealt' with management, the 'importance' of the issues which shop stewards handled independently of the FTO, and the influence of the FTO on worker representatives when they came to deal with management.

In seeking to explain the 'dependence' or 'independence' of workplace organizations, Boraston et al stress the importance of the 'resources' at the disposal of the workplace organization. The key is seen to be the size of the workplace organization itself, which determines the range and depth of resources. Size provides strength in numbers and, the larger the workplace organization, the greater the opportunities stewards have in dealing with issues without seeking outside involvement. Yet not all resources are deemed to derive from the size of the workplace organization alone; some emphasis is placed on the unity of the organization, the experience of its members and their status as employees. It is also clear that the quantity or depth of resources are not alone viewed as determining the relationship between workplace organization and the FTO. Attention must be given to the activities on which resources are expended. It is in this respect that the scope for workplace bargaining is of

particular significance.

Accepting that the availability, activities and attitudes of the FTOs themselves are important in promoting the independence of workplace organization, Boraston et al remain firmly within the school of thought which stresses the importance of management as a key influential variable. The size of the workplace organization from which so many resources flow is in turn influenced by the size of the workplace, 'which within the limits of technology is a consequence of managerial decision', whilst 'the division of negotiable issues between workplace organization and higher levels of union authority is determined by the shape of industry and company agreements which follow the structure of managerial organization' (p187).

Although a significant range of industries are covered in this study, there is perhaps insufficient depth in the data on which analysis is based. In looking at who dealt with management, one of the main criteria of steward 'dependence' or 'independence', individual case studies considered very few sets of negotiations. Even less attempt is made to assess the 'importance' of issues dealt with by either FTOs or stewards, an assessment which clearly implies some consideration of worker and steward perceptions. There is also a marked absence of any systematic analysis of the 'behind the scenes' influence ofFTOs upon stewards.

Research into industrial action taken by workers can broadly be divided into two types along not dissimilar lines to those suggested in the previous section. First, there is the statistical analysis of the incidence and frequency of strike action based upon survey data from different industries, plants and work groups. Again, the character of

the analysis has ranged from the purely descriptive to more sophisticated attempts to explore the relationship between industrial action and various influential variables. Secondly, comes work which has mainly taken the form of case studies. Having, by definition, a narrower focus of attention, certain of these studies have been able to embark upon a different form of analysis. For example, some attention has been given to the influence of worker perception and the processes involved in producing and sustaining different forms of industrial action (Goldthorpe et al, 1967; Beynon, 1973; Batstone et al, 1978).

There is little to be gained from a detailed review of the considerable volume of literature surrounding what constitutes a major area of study in its own right. So far as explanations are concerned, a significant range of structuralist theories, related to broader sociological schools of thought in industrial behaviour, have been put forward(6). Perhaps the most ambitious attempt to explain industrial action, however has adopted more of an industrial relations institutional perspective. The theory in question is that postulated by Clegg (1978) suggesting the key importance of bargaining structures. Applying such a theory to Britain, Clegg (1979) stresses the significance of bargaining structures as they affect pay, indicating that strike prone industries have in the past shared fragmented bargaining and fluctuating earnings. He goes on to note that, 'The structure of collective bargaining determines the points at which pressure for pay increases can be most effectively applied' (1979:171). Indeed with reference to differences in strike activity between different sectors Clegg also suggests that,

> In the public sector pay is settled in industry negotiations and, in manufacturing the plant is the most important level of pay settlement, with the company taking second place. Consequently strikes over pay might be expected to be

> relatively common in manufacturing and relatively rare in the public sector; but when strikes over pay occur in the public sector they might be expected to be large (1979:171).

Clegg's theory finds some support from the Warwick survey. Thus it was found that, 'The proportion of establishments that have experienced either strikes or other industrial action is somewhat smaller where multi-employer bargaining is dominant than where single-employer bargaining prevails' (1981:90). Perhaps less consistent with Clegg was the finding that both strike and non-strike action is more common where there is a corporate agreement than where bargaining is more fragmented. It is a paradox partly explained by reference to another of the survey findings, namely the limited discretion of plant managers where corporate agreements operate which prompts workers to take industrial action to force concessions at a higher level.

Clegg's ambitious theory provides a useful starting point for more detailed research into the relationship between the structure of bargaining and the character of industrial action. Whether such research would suggest a clear relationship must be open to some debate. For, if nothing else, the approach adopted by Clegg could not fully take account of the processes and the influences of workers' perceptions of industrial action. Hyman, for example, states that the study of industrial action should recognize 'the complex two-way process in which men's goals, ideas and beliefs influence and are influenced by the social structure' (1972:73).

If any research technique were capable of analysing this 'complex two-way process', it would be detailed case study work. However, significant methodological problems would arise in adopting such a dialectical approach. Whilst not necessarily denying the theoretical

validity of such an approach practical difficulties would emerge. For example, it would be difficult to distinguish empirical evidence to gauge the interrelationship between social structure and worker perceptions. Few studies can be identified which have been able to adopt systematically the dialectical approach but a number of researchers have directed their attention primarily towards processes and perceptions of workers within individual establishments. Goldthrope and Lockwood (1968) stressed the importance of worker 'orientations' as an influence upon worker activity within a car plant. Batstone et al (1978), as an off-shoot from their major project on maintenance of steward organization, also noted the continual processes needed to mobilize and shape worker attitudes when it came to taking industrial action within their engineering plant. As they noted, 'the extent to which strikes occur will be most immediately determined by processes of negotiation amongst workers themselves' (1978:4).

Consideration of research work into steward behaviour has seen the continued relevance of a number of themes developed in the previous section. Firstly, in terms of research techniques adopted to study steward behaviour, the crude distinction between survey and case study work retained some value. Each of these approaches was seen to be suited to providing different types of information on steward behaviour. As in the analysis of steward organization, the data provided by the Warwick survey allowed different forms of industrial action to be correlated with a range of influential variables, providing some indicators to an explanation. As a corrective to this rather mechanical approach, Hyman suggests the need to consider the manner in which workers' perceptions mediate between structural factors and action. Although facing practical methodological difficulties in pursuing such an approach and necessarily focusing upon a very limited number of establishments at any one time, a number of case studies have

stressed the relevance of workers' perceptions to the analysis of industrial action.

The second theme of continued relevance was the importance of management in the analysis of steward behaviour. The work of Boraston et al and Clegg has remained very much within the school of thought distinguished in the previous section. Thus Clegg has suggested a causual relationship between bargaining structure and patterns of industrial action, whilst Boraston et al have stressed the important influence bargaining structure has had upon steward dependence and independence. In both works bargaining structure is seen to be closely related to management structure and organization.

Summary

In reviewing past research some indication has been provided of the aspects of workplace organization upon which detailed analysis can focus. It has also given an insight into the models constructed and the variables identified to explain the character of these aspects. Three analytically distinct, if interrelated, areas of interest were identified; first, the origins of workplace organization and the importance of the work group as a pivotal unit in the development of organization; secondly, the patterns of steward representation and steward interaction which constitute shop steward organization; and thirdly, such steward behaviour as reflected in the role played by stewards, dependence on full time officers and industrial action. In understanding steward organization and behaviour, particular note was made of the significance attached in previous work to management. Management's influence might be felt directly through sponsorship or indirectly through bargaining structure and establishment size.

At a greater level of generality, however, it was also apparent that much of the past work has shared a common set of assumptions which have rarely been challenged. The adoption of such a set of assumptions has been a consequence of the tendency for research to focus upon workplace organization within the factory context. Interaction between workers, the formation of groups, the emergence of steward representation based upon such groups, spontaneous interaction between stewards, have been accepted as 'natural' features of workplace organization. The emergence in recent years of workplace organization within very different contexts has now rendered analysis based upon such assumptions inadequate. It is to the development of workplace organization outside of the factory and to a consideration of the new perspective needed to analyse it that attention now turns.

NOTES

1. Amongst the surveys undertaken into aspects of steward organization are those carried out by Marsh and Coker (1963); McCarthy and Parker (1968); the CIR (1973); Brown, Ebsworth and Terry (1978); Brown (ed.1981).

2. These two surveys were directed towards different respondents. The Brown et al study was based on interviews with stewards, the Warwick survey on interviews with managers, primarily personnel managers.

3. Amongst the detailed case studies carried out into aspects of steward organization are those undertaken by Sykes (1960; 1967) into the printing industry; Turner, Clack and Roberts (1967) and Beynon (1973) into the motor industry; Nichols and Armstrong (1976) into a chemical plant: Brown (1973) and Batstone, Boraston and Frenkel (1977) into engineering plants. The Goodman and Whittingham study is less easy to classify. Covering six factories from a range of industries it was possible to make a number of general observations as in surveys. The sample was not, however, so large that a number of areas of interest could not be pursued in some detail as in case studies.

4. A median figure for constituency size is perhaps of greater value than an average. Averages can, where very large and small constituencies co-exist, fail to correspond to actual constituency size of any steward. McCarthy and Parker (1968) gave an average of 60, the CIR (1973) implied an average of 44.

5. The insistence upon negotiation as a defining characteristic of stewards considered by Goodman and Whittingham was 'to avoid confusion over the position of the collecting steward'. It was perhaps indicative of the level of development of steward representation in the local government sector at the time this research was carried out that only one reference to NUPE appears throughout.

6. Amongst the works undertaken which relate to broader sociological schools of thought are those by Whyte (1951); Knowles (1952; Kerr and Siegel (1954); Walker and Guest (1957); Woodward (1958); Kuhn (1961); Trist et al (1963).

CHAPTER 2

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

The local government sector in Britain employs over two and a half million workers performing a wide range of different services. For the purpose of determining terms and conditions of employment, this local government workforce is divided into a number of bargaining units covered by over thirty separate negotiating bodies. These bodies have operated largely according to the Whitley model, which, in the post-war period, marked by expanding local government expenditure and employment, was able to help ensure a considerable degree of stability in local government industrial relations. From the late 1960s and early 1970s onwards, however, this stability has progressively been undermined by changes in the context and system of local government industrial relations (Thomson and Beaumont, 1978). The resultant instability has been reflected in the involvement of many different groups of local authority workers such as manual workers, administrative and clerical workers, teachers and firemen, in long and often bitter industrial disputes.

Given the focus of this study, attention in this chapter is primarily concentrated upon the specific changes which have taken place in local authority manual worker industrial relations. Consideration will be given, in particular, to the possible influence these changes may have had in stimulating workplace organization. There is considerable evidence to suggest that steward organization has been developing over the last decade. It was not until 1969 that stewards were formally recognized in local government. Yet in 1971 the CIR could identify 9,500 stewards in a local authority survey[1]. By 1977 the development in representation was such that Sommerton was able to note that, although the GMWU 'was unable

to quote numbers of shop stewards, it expected them to have increased over the 1971 figure, while NUPE was able to report a figure of nearly 10,000 local government stewards' (1977:7). Such findings were supported by Fryer et al (1974) who were able to report that, whilst in 1970, 39 percent of NUPE branches reported no union stewards at all and 21 percent five or more, by 1974 only 11 percent of branches reported having no stewards with 48 percent having five or more.

Reliable information about the development of other features of steward organization is less easily available. However, the industrial action that was taken by local authority manual workers at the beginning and end of the 1970s might be viewed as evidence of some form of local organization as well as providing encouragement for its further development (Suddaby, 1979).

A number of writers have identified changes in the context and system of local authority manual worker industrial relations which have contributed to the development of workplace activity[2]. Some of these changes have been specific to manual workers and others of relevance throughout the local government or public sector. Terry's summary is typical of the list of general and specific changes usually cited. He notes that the changes have included,

> the introduction of bonus schemes, the 1974 reorganization of local government, changes in personnel policy, specifically following the Bains Report, the effects of financial controls on jobs and workloads...

and, on the union side,

> in the case of NUPE the internal reorganization ...that took place (1982:1).

Developments within three specific spheres of manual worker industrial relations can be identified from this checklist of changes.

First, there have been changes on the employers' side. The employing unit has altered with local government reorganization and a more sophisticated personnel function has emerged. Second, there have been changes on the union side, particularly within constituent unions. Although Terry points specifically to reorganization of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), the most radical and dramatic of changes, developments in the other two unions, the General and Municipal Workers Union (GMWU) and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), should not be completely overlooked. Finally, there have been changes in the nature of collective bargaining, as financial pressures have increased and bonus schemes have been introduced in local negotiations.

This chapter considers in greater detail these and other developments in manual worker industrial relations which may have facilitated or contributed to the emergence of workplace organization. It then proceeds to examine research undertaken on such organization in the light of these changes. In particular, attention will be concentrated upon the extent to which this research has taken account of certain unusual features of the local authority context.

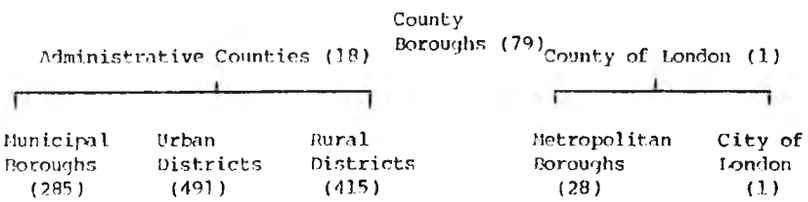
The Employers

Every local authority in England and Wales is an individual employer. Yet despite the independence such status might imply, each local authority is locked into a set of national organizations, relationships and obligations which have had some influence upon their structure and behaviour. Attention in this section focuses upon this range of unifying influences acting upon local authorities and the specific effect they have.

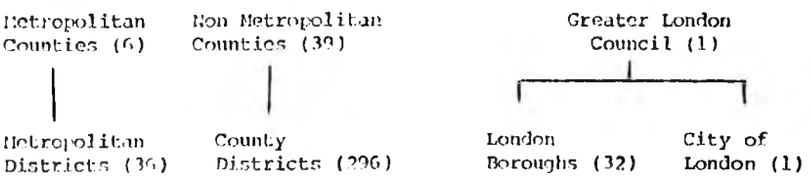
Local authorities do not represent a homogeneous concentration of employing units. A range of different types of authority varying in size, functions and geographical make-up are to be found. These structural features are determined nationally by statute. Such features have, however, been subject to radical change over the last twenty years. Two Acts within that period, the London Government Act of 1963 and the Local Government Act of 1972, have completely reorganized local government in England and Wales. Both Acts produced two tier local government: the former introduced into London thirty-two boroughs operating beneath the Greater London Council, and the latter was responsible for creating district authorities operating beneath county councils in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in the rest of the country. Figure 2.1 below provides some indication of the differences in the structure of local government in England and Wales before and after reorganization.

Figure 2.1 The Structure of Local Government

(a) The Structure pre-1963



(b) Present Structure



(Figures in brackets represent the number of authorities)

The effect of reorganization was to produce fewer and larger authorities and employing units. The number of authorities in England and Wales was reduced from over 1,300 to just over 400. There was less scope for changing the urban/rural balance of authorities. The geography of England and Wales dictated that certain authority types would remain more ruralized or urbanized than others. As the terms imply, metropolitan authorities tend to be more urbanized and non-metropolitan more ruralized. There was, however, some scope to lessen the urban/rural division, particularly at the upper tier level. The government took less care in minimizing this division than was perhaps possible[3]. This is implied by Redcliffe-Maud and Wood who note,

> It would be wrong to describe all seven (including the GLC) metropolitan counties as totally urbanized, for there are large parts of both West and South Yorkshire which have a rural character. Yet even these, and still more clearly the other five, have boundaries which maintain the division between town and country (1974:54).

A further significant consequence of reorganization was a reallocation of functions to types of authority. Table 2.1 below provides a list of functions performed by authority type, concentrating for the purpose of this study on functions that would necessitate the employment of manual workers.

Table 2.1 Authority Functions

Function	Metropolitan		Non-Metropolitan		London	
	County	District	County	District	Borough	GLC
Education		+	+		+*	
Environmental Health		+	+		+	
Housing		+		+	+	
Libraries		+	+		+	+
Museums/Galleries	+	+	+		+	+
Parks/Recreation	+	+	+	+	+	+
Social Service		+	+		+	
Refuse Collection		+		+	+	
Refuse Disposal	+		+			+
Transport/Highways	+	+	+	+	+	+

*Outer London Boroughs carry out the education function, in inner London Boroughs the education function is the responsibility of the Inner London Education Authority.

The effect of local government reorganization went beyond influencing the structure of local authorities alone. The radical change in the shape of authorities necessitated the restructuring of the national employers' associations. The four associations functioning prior to 1972 - the County Councils Association, the Association of Municipal Corporations, the Urban District Council Association and the Rural District Council Association - were replaced by three new bodies: the Association of County Councils (ACC), the Association of Metropolitan Authorities (AMA) and the Association of District Councils (ADC) (Isaac-Henry, 1977).

As broadly based local authority interest groups, these associations perform a range of functions. They seek to influence

developing local government legislation, they are concerned with standards of local authority services and they are consulted annually on the level and distribution of the rate support grant through the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance (Rhodes, Hard and Pudney, 1982). Interest in this study, however, is concentrated primarily upon how these associations act as employers' organizations. The important part played by the associations in the collective bargaining process will be considered in greater detail but it can be noted that the employers' side of most local authority negotiating bodies are drawn primarily from these associations. In recent years it has also become apparent that the associations have developed a much greater specialized interest in industrial relations[4]. In a period of growing financial restraint, with labour costs forming the major element in local authority expenditure, the emergence of such interest might have been expected.

The post war period has been marked by attempts to centralize the handling of industrial relations and personnel issues through the creation of a single employer body, the Local Authority Conditions of Service Advisory Board (LACSAB) in 1947[5]. LACSAB comprises two main components: the LACSAB council, which is made up of councillors from the associations and the major negotiating bodies, and LACSAB's full time secretariat. Each of these components should be viewed as having some unifying influence upon the handling of industrial relations issues within individual authorities. In the case of the Council this influence may be somewhat vague and indirect. On occasion, it produces rather generalized policy statements or issues advice. In the case of the secretariat the influence is liable to be more significant. Apart from servicing all local authority negotiating bodies, the secretariat will daily be dealing with individual authorities - carrying through Council

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directives, providing detailed information and advice on an ad hoc basis, issuing codes of practice and collecting manpower data.

The emergence of a more sophisticated personnel function within local government may also be linked with local government reorganization. Fowler, for example, categorically asserts that 'the one major factor influencing the development of personnel management specifically in local government has been the 1974 reorganization' (1975:107). Any major structural change gives rise to 'human, social and organizational problems' which have to be dealt with. More specifically reorganization was accompanied by the Bains Report (1972) which explicitly encouraged a rise in the standard of personnel management[6].

There is considerable evidence that the personnel function has developed within authorities. The pre-1974 'Establishment Officer', who was responsible solely for control of staff numbers, has generally given way to the 'Personnel Officer' who carries out a far broader range of functions (Hinnings and Walsh, 1980). It would be a mistake, however, to see the development of the personnel function post-1974 as a consequence of reorganization alone. A range of factors have emerged throughout the 'sixties and 'seventies influencing not only the development of the personnel function but employer and management behaviour vis-a-vis the manual workforce more generally. This period has seen an increasing volume of labour legislation, the implementation of a series of pay policies and the imposition of tighter financial controls upon authorities.

The last two decades have, therefore, witnessed a number of developments directly affecting all local authorities and stimulating

changes in employer structure and policies. Foremost amongst these developments was local government reorganization which changed the shape of the employing unit and of employer associations as well as encouraging the emergence of a more sophisticated personnel function. But tightening financial controls and pay policies have also forced authorities to pay greater attention to industrial relations issues. The influence of these factors, particularly at the national level, will perhaps become more apparent when consideration is given to employer behaviour within the collective bargaining process.

The Trade Unions

On the trade union side, various factors have produced changes both within individual unions and in relationships between them. The impact of these factors has varied within and between different unions. For example, NUPE, which is exclusively a public service union, has been much more sensitive to pressures for change than the two general unions. However, it would be a mistake to focus solely upon NUPE, for the two general unions have also been involved in major developments. The changes that can be identified might be expected to have had some influence upon worker behaviour within individual authorities and particularly where workers have developed significant workplace trade union organization.

The post-war growth in local authority employment has been paralleled by a rapid growth in local government union membership. In 1948 61.9 percent of the 1,280,000 local government workers were union members, by 1974 85.6 percent of the 2,750,000 employees were involved (Price and Bain, 1974). Significantly, however, among local authority manual workers union density had not reached such a level. It would seem from recent membership figures provided by the individual unions during the research in 1980 that the density level amongst these workers is about 68 percent.

The overall density figure for manual workers should be treated with care because it hides variations in density between different authorities and more significantly between different occupational groups. Density is much higher amongst occupational groups employing full-time male workers than those employing part-time females. The fact that 65 percent of the local authority manual workforce is female, 85 percent of whom are part-time, goes some way towards explaining the lower density figure. Also significant is thephysical disposition of the manual workers. Recruitment becomes very difficult where workers are scattered and isolated across large geographical areas.

The distribution of local authority manual membership amongst NUPE, the GMWU and the TGWU is to some extent explained by these difficulties in recruitment. Although the two general unions have a longer tradition of membership within local government, NUPE has been prepared to seek membership amongst workers who have been overlooked in the past because of recruitment difficulties. An indication of such difficulties, and early NUPE efforts to overcome them,is given by Craik who states that NUPE organizers often 'had to content themselves with contacting single individual workers on the road...they literally had to go out on the highways and byways' (1955:53). More recently, such efforts may be seen to have contributed significantly to the growth in NUPE membership from 275,000 in 1967 to 600,000 in 1977. At present NUPE has approximately 400,000 local authority manual workers in membership, the GMWU having 220,000 and the TGWU 60,000[7].

The process of recruitment and the resultant changing pattern of membership has had a very significant effect upon relations between the three unions. Competition for members has inevitably produced tension

which at times has broken into open conflict both at the national and local level. At the national level such conflict has manifested itself primarily in disputes over the distribution of seats upon the National Joint Council. This distribution, which reflects the past membership dominance of the two general unions, has increasingly become an inaccurate reflection of more recent membership trends (Kramer, 1955).

Conflict has also been particularly apparent during national campaigns of industrial action because policy differences tend to become more manifest at such times. It is worth quoting at some length the views of the GMWU National Officer for Local Government on NUPE's behaviour during the 1978-79 'Winter of Discontent' to illustrate the degree of bitterness that has at times developed between the unions. He states;

> They (NUPE) were determined to demonstrate their virility in pursuance of a recruitment drive... Their strategy was to organize chaos and pick up the pieces after. In Health, in local government, in the ambulance service, in water, they pursued the most contemptible tactics towards their fellow trade unionists to the very end...They brought the whole movement into disrepute...I want to say categorically now that the GMWU will never be led by the nose by the NUPE militant to advance left politics (GMWU Conference Report, 1979:419-20).

It is not easy to generalize about the manifestation of inter-union rivalries at the local level. Multi-unionism is not a feature of every authority, and even where it is, conflict is not a necessary consequence. Yet it is at this level that the process of recruitment actually takes place and where tensions can become entwined in personalities and specific local circumstances. Indeed, despite the formal protestations of national union officials, it is at this level that strained relations are most likely to be sustained.

An understanding of relations between the three unions, and particularly the different ways in which they have been able to organize amongst local authority manual workers, is only possible through consideration of trade union types. Although a considerable distance from a pure 'closed' union, NUPE is relatively closed in comparison with the GMWU and the TGWU, both of which corresponded closely to the pure 'open' type union (Turner, 1962)[3]. NUPE, as a sectoral union (Hughes, 1967), has been far more capable of directing its resources to its local government membership than the two general unions. At the same time its close identificaton with 'industrial unionism' has also significantly influenced the perceptions of NUPE leaders and officers and their willingness to respond to circumstances specific to the local government context.

The ability of NUPE to adapt is best illustrated by the reorganization of the union in 1974 as a direct response to local government reorganization. The crucial feature of the newly-created structure was the attempt to develop branches mirroring the new employing authorities. The district corresponding to district councils became the key basis of the branch structure. As an interim measure designed to facilitate such change, the establishment of branch district committees composed of all stewards and branch officers within a district were encouraged.

Various types of branches still exist within NUPE. Some have both local government and health service members, some cover miscellaneous geographical areas and others specific occupational groups alone. These differences have a very significant influence upon worker behaviour within authorities, as will become apparent below. Even so, it is generally accurate to view the district as the key unit of branch organization for

local authority manual workers within NUPE.

NUPE has also displayed an outstanding capacity and willingness to develop explicit leadership strategies and national campaigns. The union has, for example, launched and sustained a number of national pay campaigns most notably in 1970 and 1978-79. Furthermore, the initiative for organizational change within the union has come largely from the leadership. Taylor states, 'The very nature of the union's recruitment area and the structure of local public services places the main burden in NUPE's full time centralized direction from headquarters' (1978:250). Fryer, in particular, has argued the importance of the leadership in producing organizational change. NUPE's third and arguably the most influential GeneralSecretary, Bryn Roberts, encouraged the continued dominance of full time appointed officers within the union, whilst under Alan Fisher and Bernard Dix, the changing nature of local government industrial relations was used as a pretext to stimulate the development of steward representation. This latter view is echoed by Taylor who notes, 'The recent move towards a more democratic NUPE have arisen not from a groundswell of opinion from below but from...those who run the union at the top' (p251).

At the same time it is important to recognize that NUPE's image as a campaigning, 'progressive' and somewhat 'aggressive' union is inextricably linked with its pursuit of industrial unionism. NUPE's identification with such a conception and its adherence to the policies the pursuit of such an end implied are presented in the union's publication 'The Challenge of New Unionism'. It argues 'the need for deliberate efforts to develop industrial unionism - a form of organization in which all workers within an industry or service are members of a single union'.

The 'openness' of the two general unions has clearly limited the extent to which their structures and policies can be responsive to the specific local authority context. This is particularly well illustrated in the union branch structures. In contrast to the specifically designed NUPE branches, the TGWU and GMWU branches tend to be based upon broadly defined geographical areas. These are areas not directly related to local authority boundaries and include union members from throughout that area, often from a wide range of industries.

Yet it would be a mistake to underestimate the importance of local authority membership within either the GMWU or the TGWU. In 1973 local authority workers still formed the largest industrial grouping within the GMWU, and although local authority membership within the TGWU represents only a small proportion of total union membership, it is concentrated amongst some of the more powerful occupational groups such as refuse workers. Indeed, over the last decade there have been developments within both unions which have encouraged greater consideration of local authority worker interests and stimulated certain developments at workplace level.

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed almost parallel attempts by the GMWU and the TGWU to encourage the participation of stewards in formal union institutions. In the case of the GMWU this encouragement was primarily a response to two specific developments. Firstly, the unofficial strike of glass workers at Pilkington in 1970 'shook the GMWU to its foundations' being 'as much against the slothful ways of full time officialdom as the company' (Taylor, 1978:332). Secondly, however, there was at the same time a growing recognition of the union's stagnating membership. The creation of industrial conferences was designed to

facilitate steward involvement in and identification with the union. In common with other bargaining groups, local authority manual workers have annual regional and national conferences of shop stewards at which views on wage claims are formulated. The introduction of the new grade of district officer in 1975 might also be interpreted as an attempt to bring the union closer to the workplace.

In the TGWU there was similarly a developing awareness of the remoteness of the formal union institutions from the workplace. This was made particularly apparent by the Devlin Committee Report on the Docks in 1965, which noted the existence of an unofficial workplace organization unrecognized by the union or the employers. But it was not until Jack Jones became General Secretary of the union in 1968 that the major moves to reform the structure of the union commenced 'with a clearly thought out philosophy of "All power to the stewards"' (Taylor, 1979:134). Jones encouraged the establishment of district committees empowered to handle business in their territory and most district secretaries appointed from this time, 'were under specific instructions to foster workplace organization' (Clegg, 1979:216). This strategic initiative within the TGWU of encouraging and involving stewards formed a backcloth to the local government disputes of 1969 and 1970. Indeed, any attempt to explain the leading part played by the TGWU, particularly during the 1969 dispute, must take account of the penetration of this spirit into local government.

Although the development of district committees in the TGWU in the late 1960s was partly designed to counterbalance the authority vested in the union's trade group structure (Clegg, 1979:214), this structure continues to provide an opportunity for sectional groups to pursue their

interests. This is particularly important for relatively small groups within the union such as the local authority manual workers. The Public Services Committee, which covers these manual workers, provides an outlet for their views and interests whilst the annual meeting of local authority manual delegates allows consideration of their wage claim.

Significant changes have, therefore, been taking place involving the individual unions and their relationships. The nature of these changes and the directness of their impact at the workplace level has to some extent been related to the different types of union. NUPE, with over half of its members in local government, has been able to devote considerable resources to this particular sphere. In the field of recruitment NUPE's efforts have tended to undermine the traditional dominance of the two general unions and provoked some national and local conflict and tension. In the area of internal organization NUPE has been better placed to shape its structure and rules to the changing local government context. However, note has also been made of developments in the two general unions which, in having a broad effect throughout the union, have penetrated the local government sector. Thus the late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the encouragement of workplace organization in both unions, with major attempts being made to integrate such organization into the formal institutional structure of the union.

Collective Bargaining

One of the unifying themes running through the research work reviewed in the previous chapter was the importance of the scope and level of bargaining as an influence upon the development and character of workplace organization. In particular, note was made of the relationships between these features of bargaining and the original development of

workplace organization, the potential for steward activity and the independence or dependence of stewards. The centralization of collective bargaining within the public service sector generally and local government, in particular, has very often been regarded as one of the key factors inhibiting the more vigorous development of workplace organization (Clegg, 1979:35-36; Fryer, 1982:13-14). However, although bargaining continues to be relatively centralized for local authority manual workers, there have been subtle and significant changes in the scope for local bargaining over the last decade. Such changes might be expected to have had some influence upon the potential development of workplace organization. Terry (1982), for example, suggests a clear link between financial pressures upon authorities, the introduction of local bonus schemes and the emergence of workplace organization. In this section attention is therefore focused upon changes in the scope for bargaining at different levels and how such changes may affect worker behaviour within authorities.

The original development of collective bargaining for local authority manual workers had involved the integration of a very large number of autonomous employing units, the individual authorities, into unified structures and agreements. Prior to the First World War, terms and conditions of employment were determined locally, and, with few exceptions, unilaterally by employers. Even the reports of the Whitley Committee in 1916-17 did not immediately or significantly change this situation. The Whitley Reports laid down a blue-print for a three tier model of bargaining and consultation at national, provincial and local level and they also led to the establishment of the first national workers in 1919. However, as MacIntosh states,

> individual local authorities continued to maintain their independence of action to a considerable extent...even where agreements were made they were on a provincial not a national basis, and, while some local

> authorities refused to pay the negotiated rates others considered themselves free to pay above them. Wages and salaries paid therefore were determined by random and piecemeal bargaining, and varied in different parts of the country (1955:151).

Despite continuing pressure from the unions during the inter-war period for national agreements to eradicate poor pay within local government (Craik, 1955; Kramer, 1958) it was the Second World War, and particularly the right to unilateral arbitration established by Order 1305, which proved to be the turning point. As MacIntosh states, 'If authorities could be made to pay the same rates as other authorities were paying then it became crucially important that they should play a part in determining wages.' (1955:152)

From the reconstruction of the NJC in 1946 and the negotiation of the first national basic wage settlement in 1947 for local authority manual workers, national agreements have been relatively comprehensive. As well as establishing basic levels of pay, they have also set hours and holiday entitlements, the level of supplementary allowances and additional payments. Even so it is important to recognize that individual authorities have retained their autonomy as employers and have abided by such agreements voluntarily. (See Appendix I)

In the post-war period this voluntary adherence to such tight agreements has been subject to a number of pressures. These pressures have included incomes policies, financial constraints, local and national labour market forces and union action. In certain instances they have provoked major deviations or threatened deviations from the national agreement[9]. More generally they have encouraged changes in the scope for local bargaining which have been authorized to a greater or lesser extent by the NJC.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the scope for local bargaining was extremely limited. There was a 'safety valve' in the form of 'additional payments', which allowed authorities to take some account of local labour market pressures. There is also evidence that a limited number of bonus schemes were introduced during this period which were mainly designed to attract or retain labour. These additional payments, however had to be approved nationally and, in 1967, only 7½ percent of the manual workforce, almost all of whom were full time male workers, were on bonus (IACSAB, 1979:40).

A major turning point in the potential scope for local bargaining came with Report No.29 of the National Board for Prices and Incomes (NBPI) in 1967. The NBPI inquiry, in contrast to the Scamp (1970) and Clegg (1979) inquiries[10] which also investigated local authority manual worker pay, was prompted by the incomes policy in force at the time and was dealt with in a manner consistent with the operational mechanisms introduced by government to sustain that policy.

The generally recognized 'problems' of low pay amongst local authority manual workers, a subject area included within the terms of reference of the NBPI inquiry, was linked in the Report to 'low skill, lack of earnings opportunities and low productivity'. Three recommendations were proposed in the light of these findings. First, it suggested a fundamental review of the wages structure based on job evaluation techniques. This was carried out in 1969 and led to the replacement of the national system of zonal wage rates by a simplified seven point grading structure. Secondly, it was suggested that a revision of the negotiating structure should take place. This resulted in the early 'seventies in the integration of the Scottish authorities and county council roadmen into a unified NJC. Finally, the NBPI encouraged the objective of developing a

more effective use of labour, which was to be pursued mainly 'through the introduction of properly constructed and controlled schemes of payment relating earnings to performance' (para.64).

It was this last recommendation which opened the way to the introduction of incentive bonus schemes. The NJC has sought to maintain some influence over the shape and design of such schemes. A Code of Guiding Principles on schemes has been issued and, in line with Phase III of the government's pay policy, asserting that schemes 'must be demonstrated to be self-financing', there was an insistence upon their registration at national level in 1977. However, the negotiation and implementation of schemes has continued to be the perogative of unions and employers within authorities. (See Appendix II)

This local discretion has resulted in schemes having a significant impact on the scope for local bargaining. But care must be taken in estimating the extent and implications of this development. The scope for local bargaining has tended to broaden only for specific groups of workers. For full-time male workers schemes were introduced rapidly and extensively. In 1968 only 16 percent of full-time males were on bonus schemes; by 1975 the figure had reached 70.4 percent. (IACSAB 1979:40) For female and part-time workers, however, schemes have continued to have only a limited impact. Difficulties in measuring certain types of work carried out predominantly by females in the social services,for example, and the lack of industrial muscle needed to push for schemes, in large part accounts for their relative absence. Table 2.2 below provides some indication of the variable impact of schemes upon different types of workers.

Table 2.2 Percentage of Employees Receiving Bonus Payments

1978	% in receipt of bonus
Full-time Men	72%
Full-time Women	8%
Part-time Men	12%
Part-time Women	11%

Source: IACSAB Evidence to Comparability Commission, 1979.

The implementation of bonus schemes can be seen to have stimulated a fairly continuous broadening in the scope for bargaining. Not only were different occupational groups covered by bonus schemes over a number of years, but more significantly, these schemes have not been 'once and for all' subject areas for negotiation. Employers and unions have, on various occasions and in response to differing pressures, returned to renegotiate elements within schemes. Some indication of the extent of this renegotiation is provided by the fact that of 540 schemes registered with and approved by the NJC since 1977, 430 have involved rationalization or reappraisal of existing schemes (IACSAB, 1979:41).

Two factors appear to have prompted renegotiation: incomes policies and tightening financial controls upon local authorities. Incomes policies may be seen to have had a rather ambiguous effect upon schemes. The tendency for pay policies to hold basic rates within given limits may well have led to the negotiation of 'loosely' based schemes, providing opportunities for increased earnings. Against this, Phase III of pay policy in 1977 encouraged employers to emphasize the self-financing elements within schemes.

Financial pressures upon individual authorities have perhaps had a more direct and forceful impact upon employers at local level. These

pressures, which have included the provision of grant aid in cash rather than volume terms and penalties for authorities exceeding government expenditure guidelines (Greenwood, 1991), have prompted employers to seek savings in the area of manpower. In this financial climate the recommendations of the Clegg Commission on Pay Comparability that bonus schemes should be reviewed has been seized upon as a justification for their renegotiation in certain authorities.

The scope for local bargaining is not restricted solely to bonus schemes. For example, locally determined payments can be made to long-service employees, workers carrying out particularly unusual or dirty tasks and even quite openly to bolster earnings in tight labour market conditions. The implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act in 1974 also provided a further broad area for local discussions. However, the range and level of local payments should not be exaggerated and, certainly added to the coverage of bonus schemes identified above, the unions in their evidence to the Comparability Commission in 1979 could still claim, with justification as Table 2.3 below indicates, that local earnings opportunities remained restricted.

Table 2.3 Basic Pay as a Proportion of Average Weekly Earnings

Full-time Men	70.5%
Full-time Women	87.2%
Part-time Men	91.1%
Part-time Women	93.8%

Source: IACSAB Evidence to Comparability Commission, 1979.

Autonomous employing authorities have, therefore, moved in the post-1944 period, into unified negotiating structures and throughout been prepared to be bound voluntarily by comprehensive agreements. Such

agreements have left very little scope for local bargaining. Pressures have prompted changes in the scope for local bargaining. The introduction of bonus schemes has been seen to have provided the most significant stimulus for change. However, it was also emphasized that the coverage of such schemes was primarily limited to particular types of workers, having very little impact upon a large proportion of the workforce. Information on bargaining about other issues is less reliable. The extent, scope and coverage of local bargaining can only be determined by empirical research. Nonetheless, it is clear that such bargaining has had only a very limited influence upon earnings levels.

In summary, it has become clear that a number of significant changes have been taking place in local authority industrial relations so far as manual workers are concerned. Developments have been identified in the structure and behaviour of both unions and employers and in the structure of collective bargaining. These are, furthermore, developments which might be expected to have had a profound effect upon workers and their ability and willingness to organize at the workplace level within authorities. At the beginning of this chapter, some evidence was cited which did indeed seem to suggest the possibility of such a relationship. Such evidence was tentative and based upon rather vague statistical information. In the next section more detailed consideration is given to such evidence, and particularly, to the few attempts which have been made to relate changes identified to the character of workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers.

Workplace Organization: Past Research

Despite the changes in local authority manual worker industrial relations identified above, knowledge of the extent and manner in which

such workers have organized at the local level is extremely limited. The work undertaken in this area can be distinguished in the same manner as the more general studies into workplace organization discussed in the previous chapter: it divides into survey work and more detailed case studies. In examining previous research, the prime aim will be to identify exactly what is known about local government workplace organization. A secondary objective will be to ascertain the extent to which such work has taken account of the unique features of the local authority employment context.

From statistical information presented at the beginning of this chapter, it is clear that local authority manual workers have not been overlooked in surveys. They were included in the CIR survey (1973), the Brown et al survey (1978) and were a major focus of attention in the Fryer et al work on IRUPS (1974). Yet despite this inclusion, the information that has emerged from such work has been of very limited value.

The most significant feature of the CIR survey was the sophistication of its methodology. There was a full recognition of the problems associated with using the same analytical framework to study local authorities as to study other establishments. 'It was the difficulty of applying any establishment definition to local authorities' (1973:8) which led the CIR to undertake a separate local authority survey. Care was taken in sampling to distinguish between different types of authority and different departments within them. Such differentiation was particularly useful in indicating the departmental composition of workforces, and the significant variation in numbers attached to the departments. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to relate findings of steward numbers to authority type or department. The CIR provided an indication of total manual steward

numbers which is a useful indicator for future comparisons, but little information upon any of the intricacies of steward organization within authorities.

The subtleties of the CIR methodological approach do not appear to have been followed by Brown et al. A number of local authorities were included within their sample although little account was taken of authority type or of 'the difficulties of applying the establishment definition'. Given that the firmest conclusions reached related to the importance of establishment size upon features of steward organization, it is perhaps not too surprising that they were found to have very little relevance to the public sector. As Brown et al state,

> There are...marked contrasts between manufacturing and public service industries covered. Allowing that there are considerable variations within the public service, stewards have a relative lack of development in their organization that cannot be accounted for either by their relatively small size or their often dispersed membership (p154).

In focusing upon NUPE branches rather than upon authorities, Fryer et al were not faced with the same methodological difficulties as the former two studies. The research also went further into the detail of workplace organization. It found that the basis for steward representation varied significantly. It identified the branch as an important focus for local activity and suggested that the steward devoted most of his time in dealing with individual grievances rather than bargaining over collective issues. The problem is that the study focuses narrowly upon NUPE branches alone. Many NUPE branches cover health service workers, but more significantly, information was not obtained about authority level or 'workplace' organization which would have included workers from other unions.

The most marked feature of research work carried out into workplace organization is the absence of detailed case study work to complement the surveys. Two studies alone can be cited as having focused with any degree of specificity upon such workers: Boraston et al (1975) and Terry (1982). The first of these can be dealt with fairly briefly. The Boraston et al study gave some indication of the patterns of organization and the differing roles played by full time union officials amongst different occupational groups. For example, the full time officer was an important figure for school meals workers in dealings with management whilst school caretaker stewards acted in a relatively independent manner. Yet the case studies were very narrowly based and attention was focused upon individual union branches. Moreover they were occupational branches and therefore excluded consideration of the many groups making up the authority workforce. They were also based within the same city and did not take account of authority type.

The second study, that undertaken by Terry, is a more important piece of work and warrants more detailed consideration. It is the only study to focus directly upon steward organization at the level of the authority amongst manual workers and it also consciously seeks to relate some of the changes in local government industrial relations directly to the character of such organization. Terry's work is divided into two main parts. The first consists of two surveys identifying features of workplace organization and seeking to relate them to potentially influential variables. The second is based upon three case studies and attempts to provide an understanding of processes leading to the creation of authority level workplace organization.

The two surveys were carried out at different points in time and

sought replies from different types of respondents: stewards and personnel managers. The findings of the survey related to three specific spheres: trade unions and steward organization, management behaviour, and industrial action. On the basis of his findings, Terry points to the 'growing coverage and sophistication of shop steward organization, paralleled by developments in personnel and industrial relations management' (1982:8).

Methodologically, Terry was careful to take account of authority type, particularly with his sample of managers, if not with his steward sample. One point of contention is the manner in which local authority workforce size is treated and related to features of steward organization. The value of characterizing local authority workforces in numerical terms and then relating them to features of steward organization is somewhat questionable. Any understanding of the influence of workforce size needs to be based upon a consideration of the geographical dispersal and occupational composition of that workforce. It is not, therefore, surprising to find Terry stating that whilst, 'In private manufacturing all (structural features of steward organization) increased with (workforce) size; in local government the effect is unclear' (p5).

A more significant problem concerns the interpretation of the survey findings. Although the 'growing coverage and sophistication of steward organization' is pointed to, what stands out with far greater strength is the variation, patchiness and definite limits of developments in organization. In short, the survey findings are not particularly concrete or conclusive. Thus union densities were found to range widely between 50 to 100 percent for full time males and between 30 and 100 percent for part time workers; steward constituency size similarly ranged from 6 to 181; the closed shop was not as yet widely established and, although senior

stewards were to be found in almost three-quarters of authorities, steward hierarchies are not well developed in comparison to private manufacturing. Furthermore, only a third of the authorities had a full time steward. In at least 80 percent of the authorities there were steward and multi-union steward meetings but in not more than half were single or multi-union steward meetings regular. Finally, the fact that the number of industrial disputes reported by managers was greater than the number reported earlier by stewards does not necessarily qualify local government as a 'new strike-prone sector' (p8).

The wide variations which can exist in the character of workplace organization within different authorities are made evident in Terry's case study work. The variation is all the more interesting given that the three authorities chosen for analysis were very similar in character, all being 'smallish and semi rural'. The major conclusion reached by Terry on the basis of the case study work is that management strategy is the 'most important factor explaining the development of organization' (p15). The importance of management stems from the decisive influence played by its encouragement of workplace organization.

Management's interest in fostering the development of workplace organization was traced to increasing financial controls upon authorities. These controls necessitated more efficient utilization of manpower and this could be achieved through either a reduction in the workforce or by the introduction of productivity incentive schemes. Management were faced with the choice of either ignoring union organization and condemning it to ineffectiveness, or involving it in management processes on the assumption that this would facilitate the implementation of changes. Such involvement allowed union organization to develop and prompted active

management support of 'key stewards' who would be mobile throughout the authority and maintaining contact on an authority wide basis (ppl3-14).

Terry's case study work raises a number of interesting methodological, analytical and substantive points for discussion. Methodologically, the most striking feature of the case study authorities is their similarity. Three 'small and semi rural' non-metropolitan districts were selected. As a consequence knowledge of workplace organization within different types of authorities remains very limited. For example, how might the development and operation of workplace organization vary within 'a large urban authority'?

Analytically, the strength of Terry's work lies in its focus upon steward organization at the level of the authority but this approach also brings with it certain weaknesses. There is a tendency to overlook the detail of organization below the level of the authority. Whilst Terry accepts variation in the degree of organization between different sections of the workforce (pl2), little information is given on how such organization varies and why. Furthermore, questions related to the original development of steward representation and to the relationship between the steward and members tend to be ignored. Management may well have encouraged authority-wide organization, but what factors contributed to the emergence of the stewards themselves?

The central contention that 'management is the decisive influence' upon the development of steward organization calls attention to the need for a more sophisticated analytical approach to the management process within local government. The nature of management structures, authority and policies is particularly interesting in the local government context

bearing in mind the existence of individual service departments and councillors as employers.

Within any authority the management structure will be composed of a number of different departmental management hierarchies. The autonomy of departments, the degree of independence departmental line officers have from one another within their own departments and from officers in other departments, and their relationships with staff managers, particularly personnel officers, may vary considerable in different authorities. Management strategies are, in turn, liable to be partly dependent upon the character of these relationships.

Similarly, the party political dimension of the management process may affect management strategies. This party political dimension involves the elected councillors. In particular, it becomes important to consider their relationship with council officers. How able and willing, for example, are council officers to distance elected councillors from the management process? To what extent does this depend upon the party political allegiances of the elected councillors?

Of the substantive points raised by Terry, those related to the introduction and supervision of bonus schemes are worthy of more detailed consideration. Within the authorities studies incentive schemes may well have originally been introduced in response to financial pressures, with management feeling the need to develop steward organization in order to facilitate their implementation. However, it is important to recognize that this was not the only, or even the typical, sequence of events. Having dealt at some length above with the development schemes, it is clear that their history pre-dates the emergence of financial pressures

upon local authorities. They were initially designed not to find manpower savings but to provide earnings opportunities to low paid workers and, less overtly, to allow some employer response to local labour market conditions. Financial pressures upon authorities more commonly necessitated the renegotiation of incentive bonus schemes rather than initial implementation. Terry states that 'management introduced schemes first into the worst-organized sections, hoping that they might thus be able to isolate the stronger sections which might otherwise have resisted the scheme' (p12). If generally accurate, this appears more relevant to the process leading to the renegotiation of schemes than to their introduction. With schemes raising potential earnings by up to 30 percent, the more powerful sections of the workforce, for example, refuse workers, pressed for and were very often the first to be covered by them. Weaker sections often had to wait far longer. This sequence tended to be reversed, for fairly obvious reasons, where schemes had to be renegotiated in response to financial pressures.

The above discussion emphasizes the need for a more detailed consideration of the relationship between bonus schemes and the emergence of workplace organization. A number of interesting questions have clearly been raised. For example, is management's role confined to unifying steward organization at the level of the authority or has it played any role in the development of organization below this level? Has this encouragement been restricted to the more recent negotiation or renegotiation of schemes or can it be traced back further? Has the encouragement always taken such a direct form of sponsorship or has it on occasion been less overt? Is there a paradox to be reconciled between the uneven introduction of schemes amongst different identifiable occupational groups and the possibility of creating a unified steward organization?

Summary

This chapter has identified the significant changes taking place over the last decade within the context and structure of local authority manual worker industrial relations. On the employers' side, it was noted how local government reorganization had altered the shape of employing authorities - their geographical size, the distribution of functions and, as a consequence, the composition of their workforce - and how the personnel function had been strengthened and developed. So far as the three manual trade unions were concerned, changing patterns of membership and recruitment had come to influence inter-union relations whilst internal changes in all three unions had sought to encourage the greater integration of steward organization into the formal union structure. Finally, attention was drawn to the subtle changes which had taken place in the structure and process of collective bargaining. Although agreements remained essentially centralized, the scope for local level bargaining had broadened not least as a consequence of the introduction of bonus schemes throughout the seventies'.

It was suggested that these changes were likely to have influenced the development of steward organization within authorities. Evidence from a number of surveys which had included local authorities within their sample, indicated the emergence of more sophisticated organization. Such information was, however, of limited value. Steward numbers were clearly rising but evidence of the development of other features of organization was less apparent. Explanations that sought to relate features of steward organization to influential variables appeared to be of limited relevance in the local government context.

Note was made of the marked absence of sophisticated case study

work into steward organization amongst local authority manual workers. Terry's work alone stood out as an important point of departure. Providing an indication of the variation in the character of steward organization that could exist within very similar types of authority, his work suggested the need for research into different authority types. On the basis of this work, it also became apparent that a more sophisticated analytical framework needed to be developed to study the complex management and union processes taking place within the rather unusual local government context.

NOTES

1. The CIR adopted a looser definition of manual workers than adopted in this study. In their survey 'manual' corresponds to 'blue collar' rather than to those workers coming under the manual NJC. Included by the CIR, therefore, are engineering craftsmen and building operatives. The total number of local authority stewards estimated by the CIR to be 9,500, does not as a result accurately reflect the number of strictly defined manual stewards to be found at the time. Perhaps a more useful guide is the number of local government stewards in each of the three manual worker trade unions. Thus the CIR found that the GMWU had 2,800 stewards in the local government sector, NUPE 1,800 and TGWU 1,400 - which makes 6,000 in total.

2. Amongst the writers who have identified changes are Sommerton (1977), Fowler (1975) and Walsh (1981).

3. The Redcliffe-Maud Report (1969) stressed the need to reduce the division between town and country. Thus it states, 'The division between counties and county boroughs has prolonged an artificial separation between big towns and their surrounding hinterlands for functions whose planning and administration need to embrace both town and country' (para.6).

4. This is particularly reflected in certain organizational developments within the employer associations. Within the last three years, each of the associations has created a specialized manpower sub-committee, composed of senior politicians to discuss a broad range of industrial relations issues. The post of manpower under-secretary is also relatively new within association secretariats.

5. The developing employer interest in industrial relations, both within individual associations and authorities, has not undermined LACSAB's coordinating role but it has led to moves to bring it under tighter control. The unsuccessful attempt to reform LACSAB, initiated in 1979 by the AMA, should be seen as part of the trend towards greater and more specialized employer concern with manpower issues as financial constraints tighten. The outcome of pay negotiations clearly has significant implications for expenditure hence the desire to keep LACSAB on a 'short rein'.

6. The Bains Committee was set up in May 1971 'to produce advice for new authorities on management structure at both member and officer level'. One chapter was devoted solely to personnel management. Some indication of the importance attached by Bains to personnel management is given in the recommendation that, 'The status of the head of the personnel department must be improved from that which he now occupies. He should have direct access to the Chief Executive and not be subordinated to any other chief officer.' (1972:para.6.21)

7. These figures are in all probability slightly inflated. Unions do typically exaggerate membership levels in the interests of 'power politics'.

8. The distinction between 'open' and 'closed' unions was drawn by Turner (1962) in his attempt to develop a more dynamic approach to the study of trade union structure. 'Open' unions are those which recruit on a fairly broad front and 'closed' unions restrict membership to just one or two grades of workers. The general union and the small craft union represent pure or ideal types of each. Hughes has subsequently suggested the value of the supplementary categories of 'sectoral' and 'sectoral general' unions. Sectoral unions recruit workers from several industries within a given sector of the economy whilst sectoral general unions are open to all workers within such a sector.

9. Until the 1970s terms and conditions for workers employed by Bristol Corporation and authorities within Monmouth and Glamorgan were determined by separate joint industrial boards. It was on the recommendation of the NBPI Report No.29 that these authorities became integrated into the national machinery. How strongly committed authorities are to the national machinery and to the agreements reached within it may, however, become questionable if financial pressures increase still further. With Central Government laying particular emphasis on the need to take account of local labour market conditions, this approach may penetrate the manual workers NJC.

10. Both the Scamp and Clegg inquiries followed prolonged period of industrial action, political expediency playing an important part in their establishment. The ad hoc Scamp Inquiry, set up following the 1970 'dirty jobs strike', had only very narrow terms of reference: 'To inquire into the claim made by the Trade Union Side in April 1970' (para.1). The effect of the inquiry at national level should not be overlooked. LACSAB, for example, note that, 'Employers and trade unions consider Scamp something of a watershed and both consider the position established then as the initial point of reference when considering movements in pay.' (1979:14-15). However, apart from endorsing the NBPI Report No.29 analysis of low pay and encouraging the speedier introduction of bonus schemes, its effect on the scope of local bargaining was limited.

The reference to the Standing Commission on Pay Comparability followed the 'Winter of Discontent'. In contrast to the Scamp Inquiry attempts were made by the Clegg Commission to explore possible methods of comparability which may come to have some influence on the future determination of pay and conditions. However, political and economic circumstances decreed that the substantive recommendations on pay rather than the procedural discussion of comparability remained the most relevant elements of the report.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter is primarily devoted to the development of an analytical framework for the study of workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers. The previous two chapters gave a clear indication of the particular aspects of workplace organization upon which previous researchers had concentrated, their various research methods, and some of the theoretical models presented. Chapter Two directed attention to changes in the context and structure of local authority industrial relations which may have influenced the emergence of workplace organization and noted some of the unusual features of the local authority employment context which needed to be taken into account in the analysis.

This chapter comprises four sections. The first maps out the broad areas of interest upon which research work undertaken for this study focused. The second seeks to develop a series of classifications which facilitate the characterization of workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers. Attempts are made to classify types of stewards, types of steward organization, and the role played by stewards. The third section identifies a range of variables and factors which may influence workplace organization classifications. Factors related to three main variables, in particular, are discussed: types of authority, management structure and behaviour, and trade union structure and behaviour. In the final section, the research methods adopted for the fieldwork are presented.

The Focus of Research

The limited information available on workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers dictated the need for research work to

commence on the basis of broad areas of interest rather than on the basis of tightly drawn hypotheses. It was only when research was well under way, and the stock of knowledge available had increased, that it became possible to derive testable hypotheses of any value. The broad areas of interest which initially governed the research had to be drawn from previous work into workplace organization and from the very limited work undertaken into the local authority sector. Thus research was initially directed towards the three areas of study identified in the first chapter, namely the origins of workplace organization, steward organization and steward behaviour.

In considering the original development of workplace organization within local government, an opportunity was provided to question further the importance attached to the 'work group' as the building block of such organization. As already stressed, this study was not primarily concerned with group formation and activity outside of union structures but there was interest in the significance of the work group as a basis for steward representation. The occupational diversity of manual workforces within individual authorities suggested different processes by which steward representation developed and a clear need to distinguish between them. However, it was also apparent that for certain occupational groups, such as home helps, toilet attendants, housing estate cleaners, meals-on-wheels workers, the work situation did not inevitably lead to the formation of any kind of group. The research therefore provides an opportunity to ask how steward representation developed amongst dispersed and isolated workers, if indeed it did, and upon what criteria could constituencies be based.

Consideration of steward organization within local authorities

raised a range of particularly interesting questions related to the potential emergence of an integrated and unified workplace organization. Attention was drawn in Chapter One to the preoccupation of past researchers with the strong, well established and unified steward organizations within private manufacturing plants. Organizations within such plants developed within limited geographical areas and amongst a workforce which, although not necessarily homegeneous, were relatively undifferentiated occupationally. Within any given local authority, the workforce will be scattered over a wide geographical area and be fragmented occupationally. These features of the workforce had significant implications for the possible development of a unified local authority steward organization.

Clearly, the processes needed to create a unified organization differed drastically from those found in a private manufacturing plant. Apart from the sheer physical effort needed to create a unified organization across a large geographical area, attempts had to be made to identify or generate common aims and objectives amongst very different occupational groupings of workers. The inevitability or indeed the likelihood of an integrated steward organization forming at authority level had to be called into question. What kinds of processes were needed to create it? Had the changes in union structure and policy in any way facilitated it? Had management played an important sponsorship role (Terry:1982)? Once formed, what functions could the organization perform for such a diversified workforce? Was there a greater likelihood of steward organization developing at lower levels in the authority such as specific geographical areas or specific establishments or around particular occupational or union groups? Furthermore, given the variation in the character of steward organization identified by Terry, would steward organization vary in different types of authority and if so could patterns

be distinguished in such variation?

So far as steward behaviour was concerned, attention concentrated primarily upon the role of the steward. The initial task was to identify the character of steward activity within the local authority employment context. Two interrelated themes drawn from previous research structured this analysis. These were the importance of direct management encouragement or sponsorship in the developmentof the steward's role and the influence of a changing scope for bargaining upon that role. The two themes had been linked by Terry who argued that a broadening in the scope for bargaining, allowing the negotiation of bonus schemes, had prompted management encouragement. This is a relationship which needed to be explored further. Was steward activity solely dependent upon direct management encouragement or were stewards in any way capable of enhancing their role through their own efforts? How many stewards were actually involved in the negotiation of bonus schemes? Was this a 'once and for all' involvement? Did the steward have a role outside of bonus negotiations? What of the steward's role in the case of workers not covered by bonus schemes?

Classification of Workplace Organization

In pursuing these questions, it became apparent that a series of classifications were needed to help characterize steward organization. These classifications would facilitate analysis and, in particular, highlight differences between organizations in various authorities. Three distinct classifications were made. The first sought to distinguish different types of steward on the basis of the criteria used to determine steward constituencies. The second identified different types of steward organization, again using the criteria upon which such organization was

based. The third classification, using more familiar categories, noted the different aspects of the steward's role.

Types of Shop Steward

If the central importance of the self-regulating work group as a basis of steward representation is being denied there is a need to identify alternative criteria determining such representation. Distinguishing criteria is, however, no simple task within the local government context. The complexity of the workforce within any given authority, with a range of occupational groups working in very different conditions, suggests the possibility of significant variation in the basis of representation.

Every worker within an authority will carry out his or her work task within or at a given place. However, the nature of these workplaces will vary significantly for different groups of workers and may be defined in various ways. Within the authority a number of alternative workplaces can be identified. For certain workers the workplace will be an 'establishment' such as an old people's home (OPH) or a school. Other workers will not carry out their tasks in any given 'establishment' but within and across particular geographical areas. For example, home helps and refuse workers service homes within specific parts of the authority. These workers usually operate from depots or area offices to which they will see themselves as attached but to which they return only at intervals. Moving to a level of greater generality, the geographical area representing the local authority may itself also be viewed as a workplace. This is a qualitively different workplace from the others in that it does not correspond to the literal place of work, but it does represent an alternative point of reference and identity for workers. In short, there are a number of different, and not necessarily mutually

exclusive, locations, within which work tasks are carried out or from which work tasks are carried out. These locations are henceforth referred to as entities . This is an unfortunate and slightly clumsy expression but it is the only term sufficiently all embracing.

The picture is further complicated by the fact that within these entities it is possible to distinguish specific occupational, organizational and functional groupings of workers. Within any given 'entity', distinct occupational groupings are liable to be found. In an OPH, for example, domestics and care assistants can be distinguished; in a school, caretakers, cleaners, and school meals workers; in a cleansing depot, refuse workers, roadsweepers and gully machinists. It may also be possible to identify more broadly defined overlapping groupings embracing a range of occupations. Such groupings may be based upon management defined organizational and functional categories: sections, divisions or departments. For example, although occupationally distinct, school caretakers and cleaners may well belong to the same management defined section. Furthermore, groupings may also be based on characteristics other than those defined by management; for instance, union groupings composed of all workers from the same union.

The classification of steward types within authorities was based upon these two dimensions: the entity and the grouping. Any given steward's constituency will be based upon a particular entity and embrace workers from a specific grouping within that entity. The task of empirical research was to identify exactly which entities and groupings had come to form the basis of steward representation. Table 3.1, however, provides some indication of certain entities and groupings liable to be of some significance.

Table 3.1 Classification of Steward Types

Entity	Grouping
Establishment	Occupation, Section, Union
Depot	Occupation, Section, Division, Union
Authority	Occupation, Section, Division, Department, Union

Type of Steward Organization

A broad distinction in the classification of steward organization was made between formal and informal interaction amongst stewards. Formal interaction was defined along the lines adopted by Brown et al (1978), who stressed the regularity of such interaction, the existence of a constitution structuring it, and minute taking. Informal interaction was defined by the absence of the three characteristics of formal interaction. Although informal, however, such interactions could be well-structured and organized. Attempts were also made to distinguish individualistic lines of contact between stewards which corresponded with Batstone et al's (1977) 'networks of contact'.

The classification built upon this broad distinction between different patterns of interaction followed similar principles to those adopted to distinguish steward types. Concentrations of stewards will, in all probability, be found within a range of differing 'entities' such as the establishment, the depot or the authority itself. Additionally stewards within such 'entities' will come from specific groupings. For example, within a depot a number of stewards might come from the same section or the same union. The option remains open for stewards within that entity to meet regardless of grouping, but they may choose to interact only with stewards from the same grouping.

The Role of the Steward

Classifying the different aspects of the steward's role involved drawing upon familiar distinctions identified in the literature reviewed in Chapter One. Four aspects of the steward's role were distinguished:

(a) bargaining and consultation;

(b) resolution of grievances, disputes, problems and misunderstandings;

(c) communication of information between various parties;

(d) constituency maintenance.

Of these different aspects, the fourth requires some elaboration. As Batstone et al (1977) have highlighted, most stewards have to strive to maintain their constituencies as viable and meaningful entities. However, where stewards have members scattered across large geographical areas, the effort needed to fulfil this task assumes qualitatively different proportions. Certainly, the ability of stewards to maintain their constituencies is significantly related to the other three aspects of their role (Goodman and Whittingham, 1973:90-94). Yet within the local government context, constituency maintenance remains an analytically distinct function worth careful consideration.

Influential Variables

Authority type. A number of structural features associated with different types of authority were identified as having an influence upon the character of workplace organization. Three major variables were identified: the functions performed by the authority, the geographical size of the authority, and the urban-rural concentrations within the authority. Some consideration has already been given to these structural features, which were radically altered as a consequence of local government reorganization. However, their integration into the analytical framework

suggests the need for some further elucidation.

The functions performed by an authority have a significant impact upon the occupational composition of the workforce. Table 2.1 noted the distribution of functions between the two tiers of local government and gave an indication of the likely variation in the occupational composition of workforces in different authority types[1]. The distribution of functions is likely to influence local authority manual workforces in two ways. Firstly, the number and range of functions performed will determine the occupational diversity of the workforce. Thus metropolitan districts, non-metropolitan counties and London Borough workforces are likely to be characterized by greater occupational diversity than workforces in other types of authority. Secondly, the exact nature of functions performed will influence the kinds of workers employed. For example, only the lower tier authorities employ refuse collectors. (For a comprehensive list of occupations see Appendix III.)

Variation in the character of the authority workforces may have an influence upon the development and nature of steward organization. For example, is a unified authority level workplace organization, integrating all occupational groups, less likely to develop where the workforce is more diversified? Does the employment of certain kinds of workers facilitate or hinder the creation of workplace organization?

The structure of local government dictates that authorities will vary significantly in geographical size. At the crudest and most basic of levels, it is self-evident that upper-tier authorities will cover wider geographical areas than lower-tier authorities. This simple dichotomy can, however, be further refined. It remains very difficult to generalize

about the size of non-metropolitan districts, but metropolitan districts tend to be between 20,000 and 40,000 acres[2]. This makes the average metropolitan district larger than the average London Borough. Of the lower tier authorities, London Boroughs tend to be less than 10,000 acres in size, which makes them smaller than most metropolitan districts and many non-metropolitan districts. It is also possible to distinguish between the size of non-metropolitan and metropolitan counties. The overwhelming majority of non-metropolitan counties are over 400,000 acres, whilst at least three of the six metropolitan counties are below that size[3].

The geographical size of authorities may indirectly influence the character of workplace organization through its possible effect upon both management and union structure and behaviour. Such a possibility will be considered further below. The size of the authority may, however, have a more direct effect upon workplace organization; it may influence, for example, the practicalities of organizing over different sized areas. This raises a number of questions. Are unified and integrated authority level steward organizations more likely to develop in smaller than larger authorities? Will the processes needed to create steward organization in different size authorities vary?

The effect of geographical size upon the development and operation of workplace organization must be considered in association with the third structural feature identified; namely, the urban and rural concentrations within authorities. As previously noted, the rural/urban balance within authorities was to some extent determined by the geography of the country, although the government took less interest in minimizing the urban/rural division than was perhaps possible. The nomenclature

employed to distinguish authority types gives some indication of this balance.

The urban-rural balance within an authority may directly influence workplace organization in two ways. Firstly, the infrastructure of urban authorities, particularly the system of roads and public transport, is likely to be more developed than in rural authorities. Clearly, this will influence the ease of worker and steward mobility and communication by lessening or reinforcing isolation and dispersion. Secondly, although less tangibly, attitudes, values and traditions related to union organization and action may vary between urban and rural authorities. It may be suggested that traditions of union organization and action are liable to be stronger in metropolitan authorities than non-metropolitan authorities. These traditions may well have penetrated the local government sector and influenced workers' perceptions.

The urban-rural make-up of authorities may influence workplace organization in a number of less direct ways. Concentrations of population and the services which need to be provided for them are liable to vary between authorities. The 'problems' of the inner city metropolitan district, for example, will differ from those of the rural non-metropolitan district. Variation in services performed may influence numbers and types of workers employed, with implication for the development and character of workplace organization.

The party political allegiances of councillors may also vary between urban and rural authorities. Although care is needed in generalizing, party political fortunes being rather erratic, patterns of political representation are identifiable. Metropolitan counties, for example, are more likely to be under Labour than Conservative control and

vice versa in the case of non-metropolitan counties[4]. Focusing upon the political complexion of the council opens up a significant area of analysis which seeks to consider the relationship between party control and the development and character of workplace organization within an authority.

Management. As stressed above, one of the constant themes running through recent research has been the importance attached to management as an influence upon the development of workplace organization. In the local government sector, however, the party political dimension of the management process suggests the need for care in analysing this particular influence. In particular, it is important to distinguish between the roles and the influence of councillors and council officers, whilst also elucidating the relationship between these two sets of actors.

The influence of three features of management upon workplace organization were included within the analytical framework. The first of these was management structure and the organization of work. Consideration of these features was based upon the possibility that they might play some part in shaping steward organization. In analysing this particular influence, however, note should be made of the possible relationship between management structure and certain structural features of the authority (Greenwood et al, 1980).

Managers retain a considerable degree of discretion in the way they act towards workplace organization. The second management factor therefore looks at management attitudes and particularly the encouragement of opposition given to workplace organization. A number of indicators can be identified to gauge encouragement. These primarily relate to

facilities provided, such as time off for steward activities, steward facilities, provision of equipment and the granting of a union membership agreement. Opposition is partly reflected in a simple denial of such facilities. The question of opposition and encouragement, however, also suggests the need to consider access granted to senior decision-making levels of management as well as the variation in attitudes of councillors from different parties to workplace organization.

Bargaining and consultation machinery provides one expression of management attitudes towards stewards. For example, steward involvement in bargaining and consultation may reflect management encouragement whilst their exclusion from such procedures may reflect management opposition. However, consideration of this factor involves an attempt to distinguish which issues are bargainable at local level and draws particular attention to the effect changes in the scope of local bargaining may have had upon the development of workplace organization.

Trade Unions. Chapter Two revealed the significant changes which had taken place over the last decade both within and between manual worker trade unions. The analytical framework sought to distinguish more precisely the particular features of the trade unions which were liable to influence workplace organization. Five such features were identified. The first three - branch structure, national policies and full time union officers - represented forces external to the authority which might shape workplace organization. The final two - multi-unionism and local industrial action - were far more closely related to local circumstances.

Consideration of branch structure was based upon previous findings which indicated the close attachment between stewards and their branches

and the importance of branches in the conduct of local trade union activity. It was also derived from the possible significance of branches as an influence upon worker allegiances which affected worker identities and perspectives. Branch structure is, in turn, closely related to national policies and full time union officers. In the case of NUPE the change in branch structure was initiated at national level, with full time officers playing a key role in implementing it. Even so, it is important to distinguish the influence of these two outside factors. They may well have an effect not only upon branch structure but upon the general development and operation of workplace organization as well.

Interest in multi-unionism, as already implied, is related to the possibly divisive situation created by manual workers belonging to more than one union. However, whilst multi-unionism may inhibit the development of workplace organization embracing the total manual workforce, it raises the possibility of more sophisticated organization based upon joint structures. The fifth factor, local industrial action, is to some extent dependent upon a pre-existing level of organization. The clearest illustration of a unified workplace organization may be seen in co-ordinated industrial action. Such action may also have a significant effect upon future developments by either stimulating future organization, or undermining the organization already established.

Research Methods

The research methods adopted during the fieldwork were designed to facilitate the application of the analytical framework. The research methods clearly needed to be able to focus satisfactorily upon the features of workplace organization and the specific influential variables which had been distinguished by it. They also had to be sensitive to the

rather unusual features of the local authority context. Three dimensions of that context, in particular, had to be taken into account. First, there is the geographical dimension, with the workforce, stewards and management scattered over areas of varying but significant sizes. Second, there is the occupational dimension, with the workforce composed of a broad range of occupational groupings. Finally, the political dimension of local government, with councillors involved as employers, had to be considered in the research design.

The bulk of the fieldwork consisted of a pilot study, followed by four detailed case studies into different local authorities. To supplement these case studies, considerable information was also gathered on features of workplace organization in the number of other authorities. This information proved to be a particularly useful point of comparison for the final chapter which attempts a more general analysis.

The pilot study was concerned with the London Borough of Richmond and with the general conduct of industrial relations amongst manual workers[5]. This study, which involved fairly open-ended interviewing of stewards and council officers, attendance at various meetings and the analysis of minutes, provided an opportunity to become accustomed with the range of industrial relations processes taking place within an authority. It also encouraged the initial formulation of broad hypotheses related to the development and operation of the workplace which came to form the central focus of the major study of workplace organization.

The first of the influential variables distinguished suggested the need for a sample of four different authority types in the selection

of the case studies. Consequently the following were chosen: an inner London Borough (Hackney), a non-metropolitan county (Dorset), a metropolitan district (Birmingham) and a non-metropolitan district (Crawley). Only two authority types were excluded from detailed study, outer London Boroughs and metropolitan counties. Their omission should not, however, be viewed as too significant. The former type of authority carries out a very similar range of functions to a metropolitan district and over an area very similar in terms of the urban/rural balance. The latter authority is not a major employer of manual workers, and although this raises some interesting questions about the kind of workplace organization that might therefore develop, it should be possible to provide some answers on the basis of the four other case studies.

An attempt was made to take account of one other feature in the sample of four case studies, namely the party political compexion of the council. One of the authorities chosen was Conservative and although the other three were Labour, one of these was an authority which had been subject to recent changes in control. This change in the political complexion of the council provided a significant opportunity to contrast the operation of a steward organization within the same authority in different political contexts.

Approximately three months were devoted to research in each of the case study authorities. All connections were not, however, arbitrarily terminated at the end of this period. An attempt was made to follow through to completion negotiations which had begun during research and, in the case of one of the authorities, a return visit was made one and a half years after the detailed research had been completed in order to assess any changes in the character of workplace organization. During the three

months of intensive research, an attempt was made to become as fully aware as possible of the operation of the union and workplace organization within the authority, and to explore the industrial relations processes as they affected manual workers. The methods adopted to achieve these ends were extensive interviewing, observation, and analysis of documentary sources.

Given this study's focus of interest, the bulk of the interview work covered shop stewards and branch officeholders. In the four authorities a total of sixty-six stewards and branch officeholders were interviewed in some depth. Particular care was taken in sampling to account for occupational and geographical variations. Of the sixty-six stewards interviewed at least twenty different manual occupational groups were covered. Interviews were also conducted with local full time union officers, national officers and members of management. Ten local full time union officials with responsibilities for members within the authorities studied were interviewed. Given that an authority will have only a limited number of local full time officers, this figure therefore constituted a fairly high proportion of the total involved. Three national union officers were also interviewed in depth and on more than one occasion. Seventeen council officers were interviewed, care being taken in both selection and questioning, to account for the complexities of the management process. An attempt was made to explore the relationship between different management hierarchies, between line and staff officers, and between councillors and officers. The majority of those interviewed were specialist personnel officers on the assumption that they could provide information on these different relationships and would have the most detailed understanding of management processes as they related to manual worker industrial relations. A number of line officers and councillors were also interviewed. (See Appendix IV)

In an attempt to understand the mannner in which any organization at the workplace level operated and the roles played by workplace activists, observation of union, steward and joint union-management meetings was essential. Approximately seventy informal and formal meetings were attended during research. These included meetings of branches and branch committees of unions within the authority, and of steward and joint steward committees. Regular and ad hoc joint union-management meetings were also attended, as well as mass meetings in, for example, depots. Where possible, attempts were made through such regular attendance to follow distinct sets of negotiations such as the implementation or renegotiation of bonus schemes.

In an attempt to enrich the data gained in this way, minutes of the various meetings were also analysed. Here there were problems of accuracy and major difficulties arose from the different styles of minute-takers in different authorities. The detail presented within the minutes varied considerably, for example, some provided the names and status of those contributing to discussions, whereas others were very vague. This produced an uneveness in the quality of some of the information and inhibited comparisons which might otherwise have been made. Even so, full sets of certain minutes were obtained, i.e. dating back to 1974, and these provided invaluable insights into the historical development of workplace organization.

The case study work was supplemented by more limited research on workplace organization in fifteen other authorities. These authorities included six London Boroughs and the City of London[6], four non-metropolitan districts, one metropolitan district and two non-metropolitan counties. In these cases information was acquired from various sources. Full time union officers, for example, when interviewed often referred

to and were encouraged to discuss other authorities over which they had responsibility. Opportunistic interviewing of branch officers and stewards, in the same branches as stewards from the relevant case study authorities but employed in different authorities, was also undertaken. In addition, a more detailed picture was built-up of one non-metropolitan district where research had made considerable progress before refusal of access to certain meetings reduced its status from that of a full case study.

The findings presented in the subsequent chapters are, therefore, based on a wide range of fieldwork studies. In an attempt to seek an understanding of the development of workplace organization in local authorities, a variety of research methods have been employed. The information has been gained from four major case studies and fifteen supplementary authorities. A total of one hundred and sixteen interviews have been conducted and well over seventy meetings attended.

Summary

The limited information available on workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers necessitated that research work commence on the basis of preliminary questions rather than tightly drawn hypotheses. From previous work into workplace organization, three spheres of interest were distinguished. The first of these, the origins of workplace organization, raised questions about the development of steward representation amongst local authority workforces composed of a range of occupational groups carrying out their tasks in very different working conditions. The second was steward organization. This directed attention towards the ability of such diversified workforces to organize on a unified and integrated basis at the level of the authority and the possibility of

organization developing at lower levels or on the basis of specific groupings. The third, steward behaviour, encouraged consideration of the steward's role, how it developed and how it differed from the private manufacturing sector.

In an attempt to structure analysis of these broad areas of interest and, in an attempt to facilitate characterization of workplace organization within different authorities, a series of classifications were embodied within the analytical framework. Two of these classifications sought to distinguish different types of steward and different types of steward organization. These were two dimensional classifications dependent on the range of 'entities' and groupings upon which representation and organization could be based. The third classification was based upon the steward's role and relied upon previous research for its specific features. The final element of the analytical framework only emerged after some of the fieldwork had been carried out. This consisted of three key variables and a range of related factors, believed to have some influence upon the character of workplace organization. These were authority type and management and union structure and behaviour.

The following four chapters present the findings from the application of the analytical framework in the case study authorities. Each of the case studies is presented in three major parts. The first, which sets the background against which workplace organization developed, provides factual and descriptive information on union, management and joint structures and procedures. The second part, which considers patterns of steward organization, is divided into four sub-sections: types of stewards, types of steward organization, the role of the steward and industrial action.

In the final part, the summary and conclusions, an attempt is made to develop an explanation, drawing upon some of the influential variables identified.

NOTES

1. Table 2.1 gives only a very crude indication of occupational groups Thus the provision of education or social services by an authority will clearly necessitate the employment of occupational groupings associated with providing such services such as caretakers, cleaners, school meals workers, home helps, domestics and care assistants. The exact occupational composition of authority workforces is governed by local circumstances. Authorities do have some discretion in the manner in which services are provided and in their quality. Privatization has seen certain authorities dispense with particular occupational groups. Some may be forced to employ rather unusual occupational groups not even covered by national gradings. Authorities based upon seaside resorts, for example, will employ deckchair attendants and pier workers. The grades of these workers are usually settled at provincial council level.

2. The size of non-metropolitan district councils can vary from below 10,000 acres to over 400,000. Approximately 41 percent of non-metropolitan districts are below 50,000 acres. The largest single concentration of these authorities, 39, lies between 10,000 and 20,000 acres.

3. Information on the size of authorities was gathered from the Municipal Yearbook 1982/3.

4. Analysis of political control of authorities was based on the Municipal Yearbook 1982/83. All six metropolitan authorities are controlled by Labour and 26 English non-metropolitan counties are controlled by the Conservatives as opposed to 13 by Labour. A deterministic relationship between authority type and political control is certainly not being suggested. However, it is clear that particular authority types are considerably more likely to be controlled by one political party rather than by the other.

5. The Richmond case study was presented as an M.A. dissertation in 1979.

6. The City of London is not formally covered by the manual NJC. Terms and conditions are determined domestically.

CHAPTER 4

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY

Hackney represented a 'solidly working class' inner London Borough, covering 4,814 acres with a population of 190,700. It was a borough which in recent years had faced all the interrelated problems associated with a declining inner city area: a rapidly contracting industrial and economic base, high levels of unemployment, racial tension, and a range of other social problems. Within such an environment, local authority work remained a key source of employment. Hackney was one of the biggest, if not the biggest, employer in the borough. In 1979, 6,611 workers were employed, 2,689 of whom were white collar workers, 1,132 building operatives and craftsmen, and 2,800 manual workers who are the major focus of attention in this study.

The political complexion of the council was a clear reflection of the socio-economic background of the authority. Of the sixty council members, fifty-nine were Labour and only one Conservative. These councillors were organized in a series of service committees, which were responsible for the authorities wide range of functions, and in a number of policy-making committees. Of the former, five covered functions which employed manual workers; Housing Management, Libraries and Amenities, Arts and Recreation, Planning and Highways, and Social Service Committees. Of the latter, three were of particular importance; the Finance Committee, the Policy Committee, and the Administration Committee. The Administration Committee was the most directly relevant committee to the study being 'responsible for all matters relating to the national schemes of conditions of service of all (workers employed by the borough)'. As

became apparent, however, these committees were interrelated in various ways.

Management and the Organization of Work

Hackney's manual workforce was organized within four separate directorates. These directorates were further subdivided into divisions and, with even greater functional specificity, into sections. Table 4.1 provides a divisional breakdown of directorate workforces and gives some indication of the status of the workers to be found within them.

Table 4.1 Directorate/Divisional Structure and Related Workforces

Directorate	Division	Full-Time Manuals	Part-Time Manuals
Chief Executive's	Borough Admin. Service	86	92
	Library Service	26	19
	Baths and Recreation	106	14
	Environmental Health	23	-
		238	125
Technical and Contract Services	Engineering Service	923	-
	Administration	30	-
		953	
	Building (mainly building operatives)	1,108	-
	Engineering Design (mainly craftsmen)	24	-
Comprehensive Housing Service	Housing	150	2
Social Services	Social Work and Domestic Service	115	464
	Residential and Day Care	282	375
	Administration	7	48
		404	887
	TOTAL	2,848	1,054

Source: Personnel Directorate

Some of the divisional headings do not give a particularly clear

idea of the type of manual occupational groups to be found within them. The Borough Administrative Service included such workers as porters, cleaners and canteen workers within council buildings; the Engineering Services Division covered a diverse range of occupational groups including refuse workers, road sweepers, toilet attendants, sewage and highway workers; the Housing Division was composed of estate cleaners, both mobile and those confined to particular estates; whilst the Social Work and Domestic Service Division primarily involved home helps.

The breakdown of the manual workforce in Table 4.1 provides a useful indication of the very different types of occupational groups found within the various directorates and divisions. These differences, in turn, relate to the full-time or part-time status of workers and their sex. For example, the contrast between the Directorate of Technical and Contract Services (DTCS), the Comprehensive Housing Service Directorate and the Social Services Directorate, is striking in these respects.

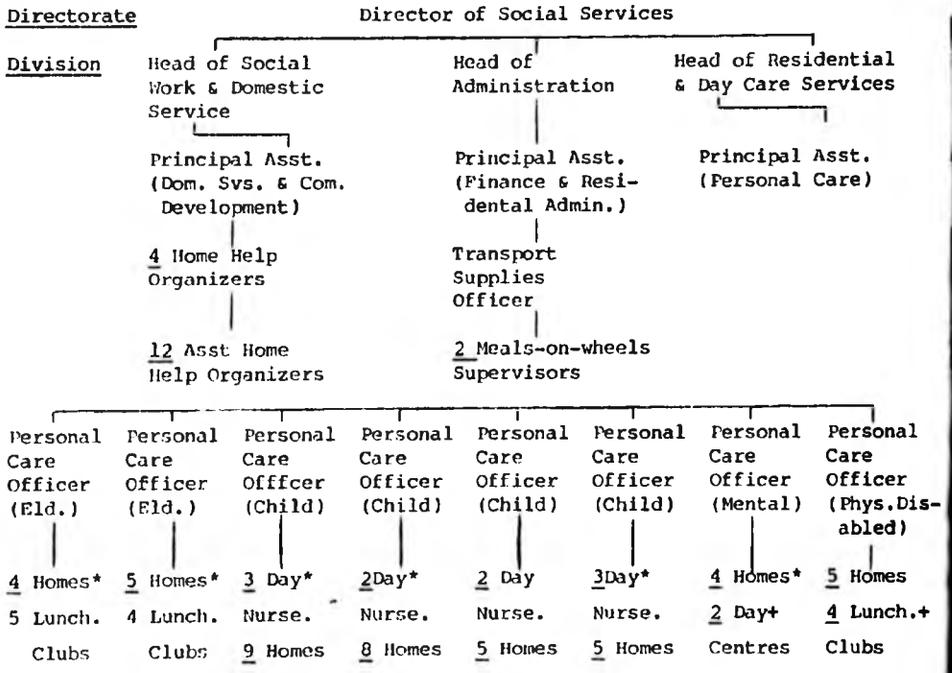
The Table cannot, however, indicate the very different working environments of the occupational groups within directorates or divisions. Although the workforces within the DTCS and the Housing Directorate were both predominantly full-time male and that of the Social Service Directorate predominantly part-time female, it would be a mistake to view these directorate workforces as in any way unified or homogeneous. Working conditions for occupational groups within the same directorate and division varied significantly. Within the SocialServices Directorate, for example, the working environment of the home help bore little comparison to that of the residential home worker; within the engineering services division there were major differences in the working environments of refuse workers, toilet attendants and highway workers. These variations in working

conditions are worthy of note for they were reflected in the different ways workers organized amongst themselves.

The existence of two further directorates within Hackney needs to be noted; the Personnel and Finance Directorates. The former of these was of particular relevance to the study. The involvement of the Personnel Directorate in the development and operation of workplace organization within the authority was a particular focus of attention.

The management structure within the three major manual directorates was complex. This is well illustrated in the figures below. Within each directorate a number of functionally distinct divisional lines of management co-existed, each with a fairly wide span of control. Similar pictures emerge in the Social Service and Housing Directorates where management structure had adapted to the geographical dispersal of its workers. Both directorates were responsible for highly scattered workforces working within a large number of separate establishments such as homes, nurseries and housing estates. The 'area' had as a result become a very important management subdivision. The Directorate of Technical and Contract Services management structure had, in contrast, adapted itself more to the broad range of services provided by workers employed within it. Four sections - sewers, street lighting, highways and cleansing - can be noted, whilst a fifth DTCS section also operated, parks, for which a detailed management structure was not available[1].

Figure 4.1 Management Structure in the Social Services Directorate



* All of these establishments have a Matron or an Officer-in-Charge, they will also have their own deputies.

+ Each luncheon club and day centre will have a supervisor.

Figure 4.2 Management Structure in the Comprehensive Housing Development

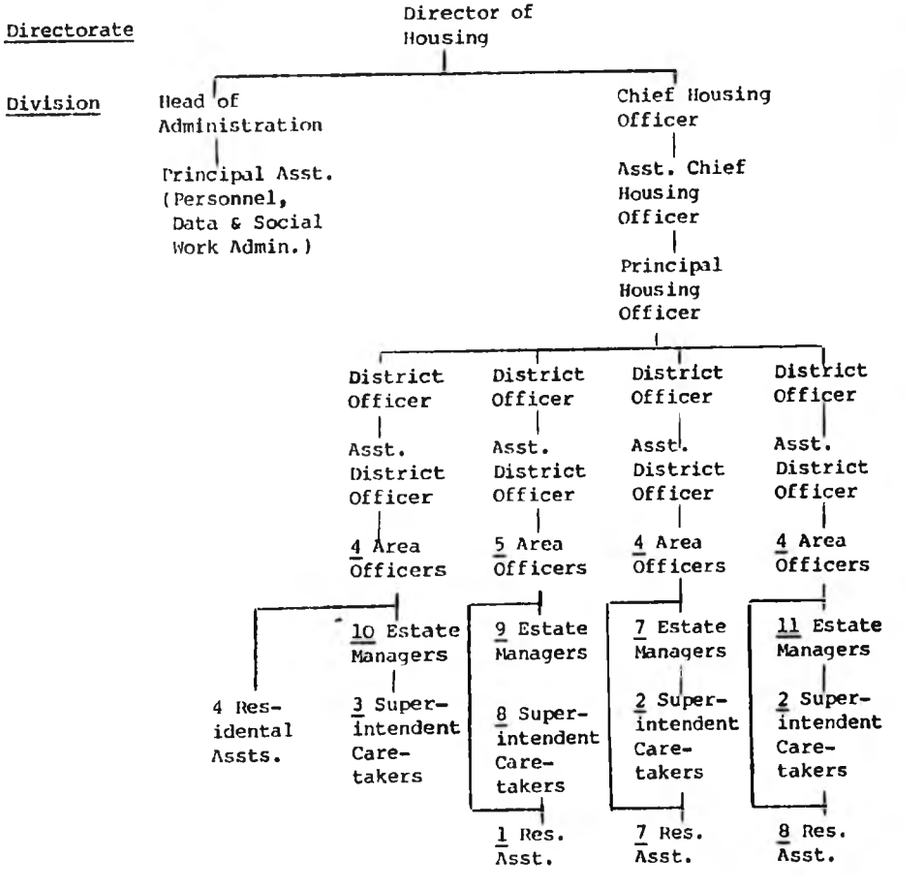
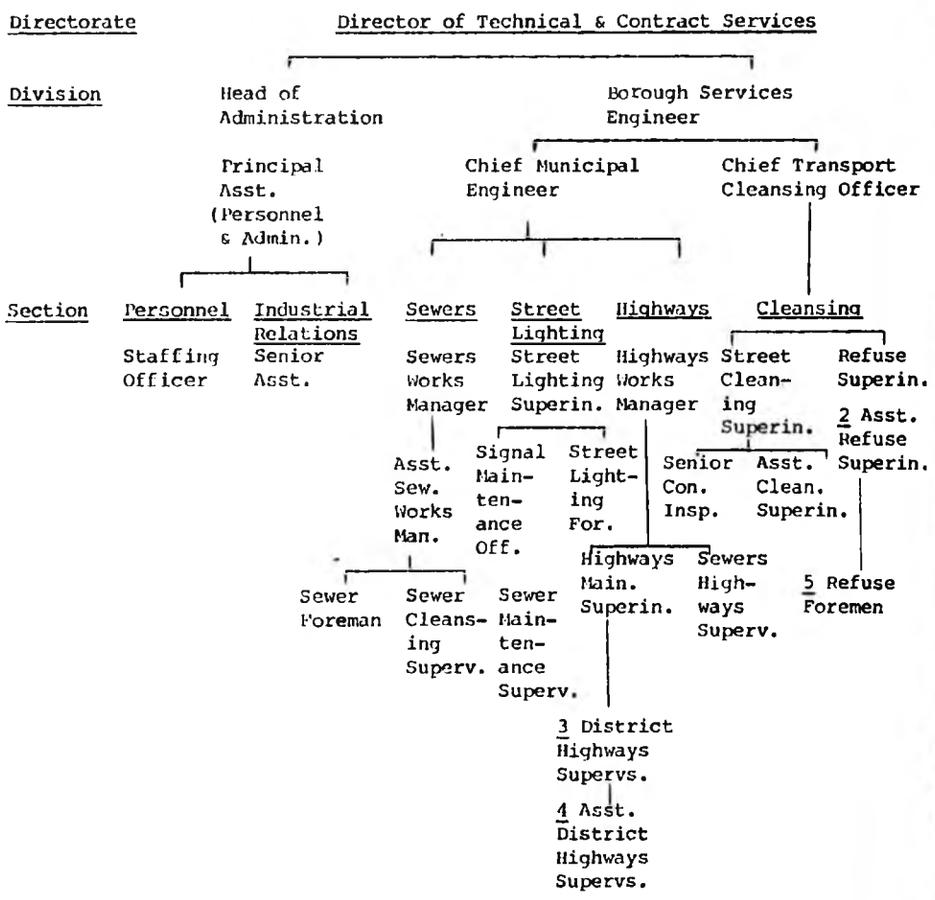


Figure 4.3 Management Structure in the Directorate of Technical and Contract Services



Source: Personnel Directorate

The figures cannot provide any indication of the distribution of authority within the management structure. Such a distribution of authority and particularly steward access to authorative management levels was certainly influential in shaping the character of workplace organization and more detailed consideration will be given to this question below.

Trade Union Organization

Three trade unions had members within the Hackney manual workforce although one union, NUPE, tended to dominate. A union membership agreement had recently been signed but this merely formalized a very high level of union density. By March 1980, as the membership table below indicates, union density was close to one hundred percent.

Table 4.2 Manual Worker Union Membership and Steward Numbers (March 1980)

NUPE	1,900 members	35 stewards
GMWU	600 "	10 "
TGWU	300 "	15 "

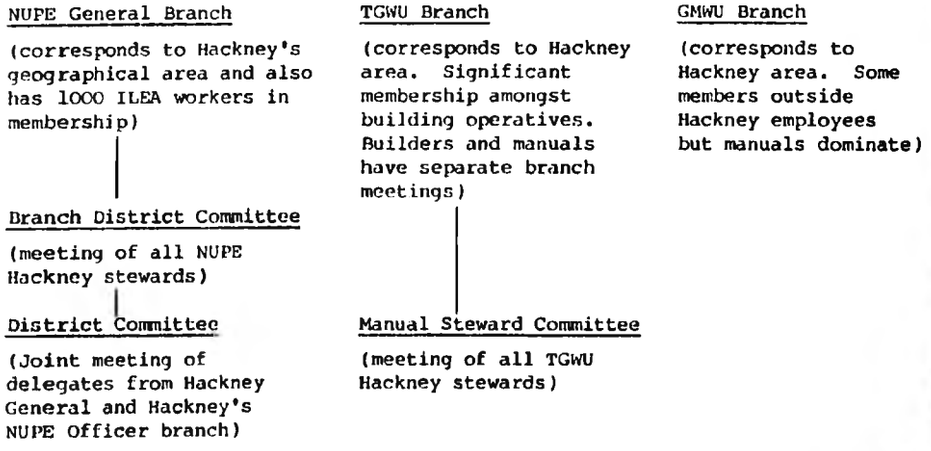
Source: Personnel Directorate

Although NUPE clearly dominated numerically, it was not the key union in every part of the authority. An interesting and distinct geographical pattern of union membership could be identified dependent on the pattern of membership in the three metropolitan boroughs which were merged to form Hackney Borough when London was reorganized in 1963; Shoreditch, Stoke Newington and the old borough of Hackney. In each of these authorities one of the three unions had completely dominated amongst the manual workforce, the TGWU, GMWU and NUPE respectively. As a legacy of such dominance, workers employed within 'areas', depots, and district officers corresponding to these old areas tended to belong to the previously

dominant union[2]. The status enjoyed by the three unions in particular parts of the authority prevented any one union from completely dominating membership in any single directorate. NUPE's control of the Social Service Directorate was close to total, but even here the GMWU had a concentration of home help members within the Stoke Newington Area Office.

All three unions had what might be labelled 'authority orientated' branches. They qualified for such a label in three distinct respects. Firstly, the area covered by the branches corresponded exactly with the boundaries of the authority. Secondly, although each had members not employed by the council or not classified as manual workers, council manual workers represented a significant proportion of the membership. Finally, branch secretaries and chairmen were all Hackney Borough employees.

Figure 4.4 Branch Structure



Turning to the joint machinery found within Hackney, a distinction needs to be made between machinery involving worker representatives and council officers and that involving worker representatives and councillors themselves. A range of Joint Negotiating Committees (JNCs), functioning at directorate level, brought together the relevant worker representatives and senior line and staff officers on a quarterly basis. Four JNCs were formally in existence and covered the DTCS, the Social Service, Housing Service and Chief Executive's Directorates, although the latter body did not meet for the duration of research.

The Joint Works Committee (JWC) was an authority-level body in which worker representatives met directly with councillors. Meetings were quarterly, with provision for emergency meetings at short notice if the need arose. Although senior council officers were present, such meetings primarily provided an opportunity for a dialogue between the manual workers and their employers. The JWC was potentially an influential body. This stemmed in large part from the influential status of the councillors involved; they included the chairmen of the eight council committees, plus the Vice-Chairman of the Administration Committee. The union side was made up of three representatives from each of the manual unions.

Workplace organization in Hackney was therefore developing amongst a workforce employed by a strong Labour Council, organized within four major directorates and belonging to three trade unions with strikingly 'authority orientated' branches. It was, furthermore, a workforce represented on formal bodies meeting regularly with both councillors and council officers.

PATTERNS OF STEWARD ORGANIZATION

Types of Steward

The significant development in steward representation amongst local authority manual workers in the 1970s was fully apparent in Hackney. In 1977 there had been just ten NUPE stewards within the Borough; by March 1980, when detailed research commenced, the number of NUPE stewards had increased to thirty-five, with a total of sixty manual stewards throughout the authority. This growth continued in the following eighteen months with fifty-two NUPE stewards alone in existence on a return visit at the end of 1981. Emphasis on steward numbers, however, tends to disguise the very different types of steward on the basis of criteria determining steward constituencies.

Four specific entities were identified as having formed the basis of representation in Hackney; the establishment, the depot, the area office and the authority itself. Stewards could and, in many instances, did represent all workers carrying out their work task either within or from these entities. It was, however, the range of competing occupational, organizational and functional groupings found within these different structures which provided the major opportunity for development. Initially stewards would tend to represent all workers within an entity. As representation developed, more refined constituencies emerged based upon certain groups within those entities. Table 4.3 below provides some indication of the steward types found.

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Table 4.3 Hackney Steward Types

Entity	Group	Member Characteristics
Establishment	(a) multi occupation	static workers
	(b) occupational group	
Depot	(a) occupational group	
	(b) sectional group	mobile workers
	(c) union group	
Area/District Office	(a) single occupation	scattered/isolated workers
Authority	(a) isolated individuals by section	
	(b) occupation	scattered/isolated workers

The establishment[3] formed an important basis of steward representation for a broad range of occupational groups within the Hackney manual workforce. For the two occupational groups working within the old people's home, domestics and care assistants, representation was based solely upon this structure. Individual OPHs usually had one steward covering both groups of workers. The contrast in the pattern of representation between the old Stoke Newington Town Hall, where the Finance Directorate was located, and the main Hackney Town Hall, provided an interesting example of how representation could develop on the basis of occupation. Both of these town halls employed porters, cleaners and canteen workers but, whilst in Stoke Newington Town Hall, one steward represented all three of these groups, in Hackney Town Hall an individual steward had emerged for each group.

For other establishment workers, particularly those within baths, libraries, children's homes and nurseries, the pattern of representation was not as easily categorized. There appeared to be an interesting discrepancy between the constituencies designated to stewards by their branches within these establishments and the constituencies they could

effectively service. Thus individual stewards were found within particular baths, libraries and children's homes. They had been elected within their place of work, saw themselves as establishment stewards and operated primarily as such. However, in a number of cases these stewards were formally deemed to represent much more broadly based constituencies. Further consideration is given to such stewards below. At present, it would be a mistake to regard their constituencies as being unconditionally based upon the establishment.

The pattern of representation amongst depot workers such as refuse workers, road sweepers and highway workers, was rather more complex than in establishments. It was complicated by the existence of the section and the union which could form the basis of representation. Three of the five depots considered were single section depots and single unions tended to dominate many of the depots to the exclusion of others[4]. Yet in the remaining two depots interesting developments in representation had taken place.

A symmetrical pattern of representation was apparent within Hackney's five depots sixteen months prior to the commencement of research. Each depot had just one steward who represented all workers regardless of occupational or sectional group. In the intervening sixteen months stewards, representing particular occupational groups within depots such as refuse workers or roadsweepers, had not emerged. This severely limited the scope for development in single section depots. However, new stewards have arisen during this time based upon union and sectional groupings.

The dominance of particular unions within depots was gradually being undermined by two processes. The first was the influx of workers

from other boroughs or spheres of employments already holding membership from other unions. The second was the internal transfer of workers between depots as a consequence of a recent local agreement. In at least one depot, a NUPE steward had arisen alongside the established TGWU steward to represent his own union members. In the two multi-section depots, the section had been seized upon as a basis of representation. In both depots separate highways and cleansing section stewards had been elected. The situation in one of these depots was in fact further complicated in as much as multi-unionism within the highways section had also produced two union grouping stewards(5).

Classification of parks stewards was rather more difficult than for other groups of workers. Depending upon the specific types of parks workers being considered, stewards might be regarded as either establishment or depot stewards. Static parks workers related to their parks very much as they would to any establishment. In contrast, mobile parks workers, who had to work on a number of sites, related to the park very much as a depot, picking up their tools and returning to it daily. Since representation for most parks workers was based upon the park, the stewards usually represented both static and mobile workers operating within and from the same park.

Those workers who were most scattered and isolated throughout the authority, such as home helps and estate cleaners, were represented by area or district office stewards. Such stewards had constituencies composed of the exact number of workers attached to particular offices. These constituencies proved particularly difficult to service. Unlike depot workers, office based workers very rarely returned to this central point. Previously the collection of wages necessitated regular visits but

this had been rendered unnecessary by the move to payment by cheque rather than cash. Amongst estate cleaners, some interesting developments in representation had taken place to compensate for the difficulties in servicing members. For example, in a number of districts two stewards were to be found effectively representing the same members. The second steward had been expressly elected to help the former steward to manage the constituency.

The final entity upon which representation was based, and one which proved to be particularly important, was the authority itself. In contrast to the other structures upon which representation had been based, which were mutually exclusive, the authority was an additional and complementary structure. A number of different circumstances gave rise to the need for stewards to represent a particular grouping of workers throughout the authority. For certain workers it was simply not possible to elect stewards within lower level entities. In toilets and luncheon clubs, for example, the largest number of workers employed at any given time was only two. Some basis for representation beyond the establishment clearly had to be found for these workers and the authority was considered viable. Inability to elect stewards also sprang from the rather unusual geographical pattern of union membership previously referred to. With particular unions dominating specific areas of the authority, the isolated worker not in that union found himself without a steward. For parks workers, two authority level stewards, a TGWU and NUPE steward, existed solely to represent such scattered and isolated union members within parks.

In many instances an inability to elect stewards based upon lower level entities combined with an unwillingness to do so. This appeared

to be the case with the baths, libraries and children's homes workers already referred to. Some of these entities were too small to elect stewards but the existence of just four stewards for eight baths, eighteen libraries and thirty-five children's homes could only be explained by a degree of member apathy. Authority stewards had as a consequence been appointed by branches; two baths stewards representing their respective union groupings throughout the authority, plus a single authority library and a single authority children's homes steward. The resultant discrepancy between the stewards' formal responsibilities and their operational activities has already been noted. This type of 'authority steward' might perhaps be regarded as a 'quasi steward'. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the whole authority was considered a viable basis for a steward constituency(6).

It was possible to build-up a dynamic picture of the development of steward representation in Hackney and such a picture was further enriched by the return visit to the authority. Whilst the initial development of representation as described above had been related to a refinement of constituencies on the basis of grouping, the increase in the number of stewards apparent after the eighteen month interval reflected a refinement on the basis of entity. The emergence of a greater number of stewards at this later date primarily derived from a greater exploitation of the establishment as a basis for constituencies. It was a development which slightly undermined the coverage of authority-wide stewards. For example, a greater number of stewards representing individual children's homes, baths, libraries and parks were in evidence. Yet the continued inability and unwillingness of certain workers to elect stewards necessitated the retention of authority stewards acting very much as a 'safety net'.

Analysis of steward representation, therefore, suggests the importance of three mutually exclusive entities as the basis of representation for different groups of workers. The fourth, the authority, had clearly come to constitute a very important additional entity particularly for those workers unwilling or unable to elect their own steward. Whilst the coverage of such authority stewards might be undermined as more establishment stewards emerged, their importance remained. It was also apparent that groupings within entities provided opportunities for further developments in representation. Thus particular steward types were liable to be more significant at different states in the development of representation. In the early stages the entity alone provided the basis for steward constituencies; the establishment and depot regardless of groupings within. In time, particular groupings within entities such as occupation, section and union, were exploited to refine constituencies.

Types of Steward Organization

The outstanding features of steward organization within Hackney was its sophistication at the level of the authority. All formal steward bodies were based firmly upon the authority rather than upon lower level entities such as establishments and depots, and therefore covered the whole of the borough. A considerable number of these bodies allowed only stewards from certain groups to participate within them, for example, stewards from one union or directorate across the authority. What was significant, however, was the existence in Hackney of 'umbrella' structures. These bodies were open to all stewards regardless of group within the authority and thereby facilitated the integration of stewards into a unified authority level organization.

Attention will initially be given to the character of informal

interaction between stewards. The discussion will then turn to consider steward interaction within bodies restricted to stewards from specific groups. In particular, union bodies will be looked at such as branches, branch and steward committees, and the Joint Negotiating Committees at directorate level. Finally, those structures mitigating the divisive and fragmentary influence of 'group specific' organization and enabling the reintegration of stewards into a unified body will be considered. These integrative bodies included the Joint Works Committee and the Joint Shop Stewards Committee.

Informal interaction between stewards either in the form of networks of contact or of a more organized kind through irregular ad hoc meetings was very limited within Hackney. The opportunities for this type of contact were not great. In many entities - OPHs, Area Offices and certain depots - one steward alone was to be found. For such isolated stewards attempts to maintain some form of informal contact therefore necessitated making conscious efforts to reach other stewards in different parts of the authority. Such attempts were not unknown. The two baths stewards were in telephone contact with one another to discuss common problems, whilst an experienced OPH steward was in contact with a newly elected steward to provide some support. These instances were, however, rare and certainly it was not possible to identify tangled and complex networks of contact which ran, for example, across section, division or directorate.

If a network of contact could be identified, it largely revolved around branch officers; the NUPE Branch Secretary and the TGWU Branch Chairman. These figures corresponded closely to Terry's 'key stewards' (1982). They were de facto full time stewards. Management did not

officially recognize such a post but in effect they were prepared to allow these stewards to spend all of their working time on union work. Vigorous efforts were made by the two branch officers to maintain contact with stewards. This was achieved partly through their mobility across the authority but also through their accessibility, at a particular place and time. Both the NUPE and TGWU branch officers were present in the foyer of the Town Hall every morning and stewards very often made special journeys to seek their advice and help.

The importance of these key figures stemmed to a significant extent from their access to senior levels of management. It was not solely or even primarily a matter of such council officers encouraging access or feeling that such contact was in some way beneficial to the achievement of certain of their aims. These union representatives had the time and had been able to establish informal relationships with senior officers and they invariably knew where to go in the complex management hierarchy to settle problems quickly. If an attempt were to be made to draw an analogy depicting Hackney's network of contact it might be with a wheel. The branch officers tended to represent the hub, their stewards having straight lines of contact with them, but having very little contact with fellow stewards.

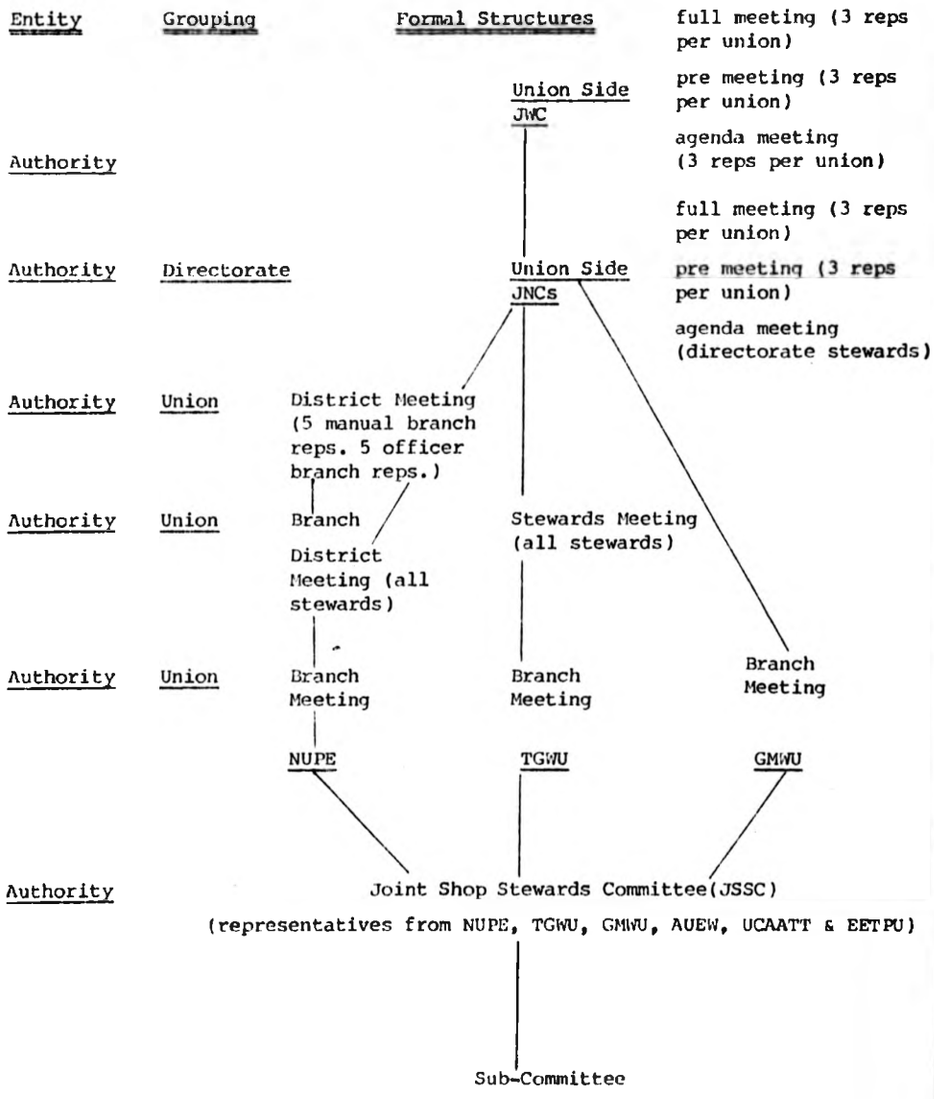
Informal contact of a more organized kind was in greater evidence, although it was not particularly extensive. Issues could arise within depots which needed to be discussed between stewards with members there. For example, a working party had been set up in one depot which included the two depot stewards and lower line officers, to discuss depot facilities. At the higher level of the authority home help stewards had on occasion come together to discuss protective clothing. The major

impetus for ad hoc meetings was the discussion of bonus. Three parks stewards had, for instance, been meeting with council officers to negotiate a bonus scheme and these stewards, in turn, had been reporting back to larger meetings of all parks stewards. The highway stewards had similarly met on their own initiative to discuss problems with their scheme and to explore the possibility of renegotiating it. Yet it is important to re-emphasize that such meetings were not regular and did not involve a great number of the authority's stewards.

Figure 4.5 illustrates the range of formal bodies which, in the absence of extensive informal contact, had come to structure steward organization within Hackney. Three distinct forms of interaction can be identified from the figure. The first form involved all stewards in the authority from one union and could be labelled 'authority-union' interaction. The second involved stewards from across the authority from within a specific directorate. This will be referred to as 'authority-directorate' interaction. The third form involved stewards from throughout the authority regardless of their group. In practice then, this was an 'open' form of interaction. Consideration is given below to each of these different kinds of steward interaction.

The 'authority orientated' nature of Hackney's branches was noted in the introduction to this case study and this was particularly important in that branch structures therefore embraced all workers and stewards across the whole of the authority and few workers from outside. Two structures were identified within which 'authority-union' interaction could take place, branch meetings and steward committee meetings. Any presumption that branches, in corresponding closely to the authority, might produce well attended and dynamic branch meetings quickly had to be

Figure 4.5 Formal Steward Interaction



qualified. Focusing primarily upon NUPE and the TGWU, average branch attendances were 18 and 19 respectively[7]. Only at the meetings of the TGWU branch did a significant proportion of the steward body appear. Indeed, seven or eight TGWU stewards, about half the union's total steward body, were regularly present. The NUPE branch meeting was particularly important in that stewards were elected and often designated constituencies at such meetings. However, of the three unions, the TGWU placed the greatest emphasis on the importance of branch meetings. In this case branch meetings were treated as a forum within which not just stewards, but all union members, from throughout the authority, could meet. TGWU branch meetings were held frequently, twice a month, and the 'Star Night' had been introduced to encourage member attendance. The 'Star Night', held on a quarterly basis, was a special branch meeting at which all members were obliged to be present under threat of fine.

In contrast to branch meetings, the steward committee meetings of both NUPE and the TGWU were of crucial importance as forums within which stewards could interact[8]. Expressly created for such a purpose, these committees provided the only forum within which a sizable proportion of these unions' stewards could meet.

Of these two committees, that of NUPE had been playing this role for a longer period of time and had developed into a more sophisticated body. Dating back in its present form to 1977, the NUPE Branch Committee regularly attracted a significant number of stewards. Although branch officers still considered attendance disappointing, as stewards were granted time-off work to attend, an average of twenty-three stewards were present, representing 64 percent of the branch's 1980 steward body[9].

Three basic processes were found to take place within this committee. The first involved the dissemination of local and national level information. The second saw the resolution of problems brought to the notice of the branch secretary by the stewards. Finally, some decision-making took place on broad policy issues(10).

Although the NUPE full time officer was very often present at these steward committee meetings, his role was very much confined to providing points of information on legal and nationally related issues and supporting the Branch Secretary. As already suggested, it was the Branch Secretary who played the key role within the committee, dealing with problems raised and providing a viewpoint. This viewpoint, it perhaps needs to be added, was invariably accepted by the stewards present.

The TGWU steward committee was, in contrast, more recently established with its first meeting in March 1980. It was a body created for a very specific purpose, that is, monitoring the effect of cuts in the borough. Recognizing the difficulties of communication between stewards in pursuing the policy of 'no cover for posts left vacant', the committee played an important role.

'Authority-Union' interaction allowed stewards from throughout the authority to meet regardless of the occupational and functional groups of workers they might represent. The steward committees of both NUPE and the TGWU were particularly important as forums within which such interaction could take place. The fact that the branches covered areas corresponding to the authority made it possible to bring together a large number of stewards and to enable them to discuss authority related issues. For most stewards interaction with fellow stewards was confined primarily to meetings within union structures and this certainly

served as a powerful force instilling allegiance to and identity with their union, rather than an authority-wide group of stewards.

The next type of interaction which involved stewards from specific directorates cut directly across union boundaries. The range of joint structures based upon the directorate provided a number of opportunities for the stewards involved to interact with one another. As Figure 4.5 indicates, such interaction could take place not only at full meetings but at meetings held to formulate an agenda and at pre-meetings of the union side. The Joint Negotiating Committees were created at the same time, 1977, and had basically the same constitutions. In theory, then, there were similar opportunities for steward interaction. In practice, however, there were significant variations in the pattern of such interaction in the different JNCs.

JNCs agenda meetings, which all directorate stewards were entitled to attend, provided the best opportunities for stewards to meet. Again, however, attendances were not outstandingly high. For example, in both the DTCS and the Social Services Directorate, about one third of stewards entitled to attend did so. Yet there remained a strong contrast in the pattern of interaction in agenda meetings between these two JNCs. Stewards from a far greater range of occupations, sections and unions were present at the DTCS agenda meetings. The NUPE Branch Secretary, the TGWU and GMWU Branch Chairmen, the three key branch officeholders, were present at all directorate meetings. They were also all employed in different sections of the DTCS. Their guaranteed attendance at the DTCS agenda meeting therefore helped broaden the range of groups represented at this meeting. Apart from their attendance, it was clear that a broad range of occupational, functional and organizational groups

were represented by the many stewards present. Thus stewards representative of the three unions usually attended from the highways, cleansing, parks and some sewage sections. At similar meetings within the Social Service Directorate, OPH and home help stewards alone were present and usually all from NUPE. Ironically the guaranteed attendance of the three branch officeholders at the Social Service meetings could sometimes result in the presence of more DTCS representatives than Social Service representatives.

This pattern of attendance was repeated at pre - and full - JNC meetings, despite the fact that in both instances the delegations of stewards were fixed rather than open. Union representation in all JNCs was restricted to three stewards per union. In the DTCS the majority of seats were taken up, with the consequent attendance of stewards from different occupations, sections and unions yet again. In the Social Service JNC, all seats were not taken up and attendance was similar in character to that at agenda meetings.

These differences in steward attendance within the JNCs and their related structures can be traced to differences in the pattern of union membership and steward representation. The genuinely multi-union situation within the DTCS, with each of the three unions having a significant concentration of membership, enabled all seats to be taken up and made it more likely that stewards from different unions would attend. Furthermore, the fact that stewards within this directorate had constituencies based upon lower level entities, particularly depots spread across the authority, resulted in the emergence of a number of stewards for the same section. The chances of at least one of these stewards attending to ensure representation of that section at meetings was

thereby enhanced. In contrast, the Social Service Directorate was dominated by NUPE, preventing the other unions from taking up their seat allocations and hence inhibiting inter-union interaction. It was also apparent that many sections and occupations within this directorate were only represented by a single steward. The importance of the single, isolated, authority-level steward for workers in children's homes, luncheon clubs and meals-on-wheels, has already been noted. The non-attendance of these stewards, more likely where only one existed, resulted in such groups being unrepresented at meetings.

These differences in the pattern of steward interaction within JNCs and their related structures were to have a very significant influence upon the operation of these bodies, as will be noted in the following section. However, of particular interest at this point in the discussion, is the extent to which such 'authority-directorate' interaction served to break down and cut-across allegiance to specific union bodies. The number of stewards meeting within any of the directorate-specific forums was not as great as within union bodies. As noted, the pre-JNC and full-JNC meetings were restricted to fixed delegations but even within open agenda meetings attendances were not particularly high. Certainly, the presence of the leading branch officers of the three unions at all joint meetings served to encourage the adoption of a broader inter-union perspective. However, there were clear differences between the two JNCs in the likelihood of such a perspective being reinforced amongst the stewards. A broader perspective was more likely to be adopted within the multi-union DTCS JNC, than the single union Social Service JNC.

Both 'authority-union' and 'authority-directorate' steward

interaction were liable to induce the development of parochial interests. The divisive influence of such interaction was mitigated in two ways. Firstly, these different forms of interaction encouraged the development of cross-cutting allegiances. Union interaction involved stewards from different occupational and functional groups, whilst directorate interaction involved stewards from different unions. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, authority bodies existed which were open to all stewards regardless of the occupational, functional or organizational group to which they belonged. These bodies served to reintegrate stewards into a unified organization.

Two bodies in particular played an integrative role within Hackney. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC) and the Joint Works Committee (JWC). From the viewpoint of the workers themselves, Hackney's Joint Works Committee was the key body in the industrial relations processes taking place within the authority. This will become more apparent when consideration is given to the role of the stewards in Hackney. However, it may be noted that this importance stemmed from the fact that within it stewards had direct contact with councillors. As a forum integrating stewards into a more broadly based steward organization the JWC had some effect in breaking down occupational, sectional and directorate divisions. It was perhaps at its most effective in reducing the divisive effects of multi-unionism.

The trade union side of the JWC was made-up of only three stewards from each of the authority's manual unions. Unlike the JNC agenda meetings, the JWC agenda meeting was open only to the nine representatives and therefore the proportion of the authority's steward body that could meet there was rather limited. All seats on the JWC were taken with the

result that stewards from the different unions were at least meeting with some degree of regularity. Yet whilst the potential for inter-union interaction was being fulfilled, the potential for interaction between stewards from different occupations, sections and directorates was not. Closer attention to the union side clearly revealed that certain sections and directorates were over-represented in terms of the numbers employed within them[11]. Attempts were made to find representatives from different directorates. For example, NUPE ensured that at least one of its delegates came from the Social Service Directorate[12], there were two representatives from the Housing Directorate and the Chief Executive's Directorate was represented by a baths steward. However, five of the nine delegates came from one directorate alone, the DTCS, the three branch officeholders each holding a seat plus two additional delegates.

Despite the over-representation of the DTCS within the JWC, it did appear that this particular body was fairly successful in promoting a significant degree of unity and a common outlook amongst stewards. When consideration is given to industrial action, the importance of the union side of the JWC as a co-ordinating body will become more apparent. More specifically, within particular JWC meetings it was also clear that many issues emerging from the union side concerned the whole of the workforce and not just parts of it. Thus over a third of the issues arising at the JWC meetings analysed were of broad concern to all manual workers in the authority.

The second integrative authority-wide body, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, did not provide a major opportunity for a large body of stewards to meet, the agreed union delegations being limited in size. But its effectiveness in encouraging unity amongst a wider range of

stewards, particularly through the pursuit of broader aims, was gradually increasing. The composition and objectives of the JSSC reflected the circumstances which led to its creation. Formed in 1979, the JSSC was a direct response to the need for the authority unions to establish a forum within which information could be provided and action co-ordinated during the winter dispute of that year. The JSSC was composed of all blue collar unions, both manual and craft and, to quote its constitution, sought to 'provide for an exchange of views and information' between different unions; to identify 'common issues for the purpose of making either joint or simultaneous representation and/or recommending and co-ordinating any such action'; and to resolve any problems that may arise between groups and unions'.

The manual workers' delegation contained representatives from the three trade unions, namely the three major branch officeholders already referred to. The two additional manual stewards who usually accompanied them were from the directorates of Social Services and Housing. Overall, therefore, three directorates were represented. Where divisions were expressed, they tended to be between the manual unions and the craft unions rather than within the manual delegation. But common approaches were adopted. The JSSC was proving to be a particularly useful body for monitoring the implementation of cuts throughout the authority's blue collar workforce, with a considerable interchange of information. More positively, the JSSC sub-committee, where most of the detailed discussions took place, had developed a code of guiding principles on the implementation of bonus schemes which it was seeking to impose on management and had gained de facto recognition as a bargaining team on such broad issues as the implementation of the shorter working week and the development of a rationalized protective

clothing schedule. The sub-committee was also meeting regularly with senior council officers to discuss relevant issues of general concern. Finally, the JSSC was successfully co-ordinating industrial action during the period of research, encouraging TGWU stores workers to withhold materials from mobile patrols (officer grades) carrying out UCATT members' tasks.

The main form of steward organization identified within Hackney has been seen to operate at the authority level. All formal structures were based upon the authority rather than upon any lower level entities. It has been stressed that two sets of bodies, union bodies and directorate bodies, allowed only stewards from specific groups to meet. However, the effect of interaction within these structures upon allegiances and outlooks was qualified in two crucial respects. Firstly, union interaction 'cut-across' directorate interaction in that union meetings saw interaction between different occupational stewards and directorate meetings interaction between different union stewards. Secondly, and more importantly, two authority structures were found which were open to stewards regardless of group. Whilst not over-estimating the number of stewards involved, these bodies did encourage the reintegration of key branch officeholders and stewards into a unified manual worker organization and the adoption of broader union perspectives. Whether meeting within integrated authority structures was actually translated into unified action is only discernable through a closer analysis of steward and worker behaviour. It is therefore to a consideration of the role of the stewards and the ability of the workforce to take unified industrial action that attention now turns.

The Role of the Steward

The broadening of the scope of local level bargaining and consultation has been suggested as one of the key factors leading to the development of the steward's role and the emergence of a greater number of stewards. In Hackney, however, such a straightforward relationship was not so clearly identifiable. The majority of Hackney's stewards simply did not participate in bargaining or consultation despite the opportunities which undoubtedly existed. The resolution of grievances and problems and the communication of information appeared far more central to their role.

This section seeks to consider these three different aspects of the stewards' role: bargaining and consultation, problem - resolution and communication, and the stewards' ability to actually service members. In so doing, attention needs to focus upon steward activity both within and outside of the JNCs and the JMC. Also important is the distribution of decision-making authority within the management structure which influences the steward's ability to perform his role.

Looking firstly at bargaining, consultation and problem resolution outside of joint structures, it might have been expected, particularly given the discussion in the earlier chapters, that the introduction of bonus schemes provided considerable scope for such activities to take place. Not only would schemes initially have to be negotiated but as they began to operate, they might give rise to substantive bargainable issues or problems. In fact, bonus schemes had a rather limited impact upon the steward's role within Hackney. Within certain directorates, particularly the Social Service Directorate, where the number of stewards had grown considerably in recent years, bonus schemes had not been

introduced at all. Elsewhere, the limited impact was explained primarily by procedures adopted for handling bonus related issues.

Negotiation of bonus schemes invariably involved the three key branch officers. The viability of including other stewards varied to some extent with the actual number of stewards representing the particular group of workers to be covered by the scheme. Thus there was no problem in involving the single stores steward in the negotiation of the stores bonus scheme or depot stewards in the negotiation of the refuse productivity scheme. As already implied, however, the significant number of parks stewards necessitated the nomination of three parks stewards as members of a negotiating team. Where problems arose with schemes, there was yet again a tendency to rely upon the three branch officeholders to deal with them.

There was general agreement amongst both management and stewards that certain issues, other than those related to bonus, were negotiable with lower line management. These included minor health and safety issues, allocation of overtime and changes in particular organizational features of work. However, most of the Hackney stewards remained primarily resolvers of problems and communicators of information.

Many of the problems dealt with were of an individual rather than a collective nature. For example, the steward might discuss with management whether a man late for work should lose pay; he might seek to conciliate where there had been a clash of personalities between workers or between workers and management; he would be present to represent a member at a disciplinary meeting; and he would seek to clarify misunderstandings over details on wage slips, queries on deductions

or additional payments[13]. As a communicator, the steward would be involved in the distribution of union journals, newsheets or informing members of wage offers and final settlements.

The performance of these functions is not as unproblematical for local authority stewards as for stewards within the more confined factory environment. A final aspect of the steward's role was therefore maintaining the constituency as a viable and meaningful unit. The efforts made by stewards to achieve such maintenance varied according to the nature of the steward's constituency. But, given the importance of the 'authority steward' in Hackney, it might have been expected that strenuous and widespread efforts were needed. In fact, it was interesting to note just what efforts were made by stewards to keep in contact with members.

Two particular strategies adopted by stewards to maintain constituencies were identified. As an example of the first strategy, which will be referred to as 'mobility' or 'access to mobility', the parks authority steward and one of the highway stewards were drivers and thus could travel to members. More ingeniously, a number of stewards, even though they were not themselves mobile, used other mobile figures to communicate with members. For example, one of the baths stewards, working next to a library, maintained contact with members through a library van driver travelling throughout the authority. The other baths steward relied upon a member of management to transport her to members if the need arose. Management also played a crucial part in the second strategy, which can be described as 'predictable accessibility'. For example, home help stewards, who had the most scattered of memberships, used home help organizers to pass on messages,

since they were permanently situated within the area office and more likely to come in contact with home helps. The toilet attendant authority steward, to quote another example of predictable accessibility, was present in the Town Hall foyer at set times every week to meet members.

A number of factors were identified in seeking to explain why the steward's role outside of joint structures within Hackney should be so restricted to dealing primarily with individual problems rather than with a broader range of bargainable issues. The steward's scope for bargaining was severely limited by the lack of decision-making authority amongst lower line management. Unable to make progress with supervisors or foremen, the inexperience of Hackney's stewards[14] and the fact that they were simply not in close proximity to senior levels of management, inhibited the degree to which they could pursue bargainable issues. As has been stressed, there was a tendency to rely upon branch officers. Certainly, they relied on these officers, who had the time and ability to develop informal relationships with higher levels of management, to a greater extent than full time officers. As a result, there was a very real possibility of a vicious circle developing, lack of experience leading to reliance which, in turn, inhibited the accumulation of experience. However, opportunities for steward bargaining and consultation were also reduced as collective issues of any import were injected automatically into joint structures.

Analysis in the previous section revealed the limited number of stewards involved in joint structures. It was interesting to note that outside of union bodies, only sixteen of the authority's sixty stewards were involved in any other formal body. In this way resort to joint structures very quickly put issues out of the reach of the majority of

stewards. Yet it remains of some importance to consider the roles played by those stewards who did participate in joint structures.

Formal joint union-council officer structures were created in 1977 originally as Joint Consultative Committees. Their emergence was on the initiative of the Personnel Directorate seeking to 'rationalize' joint industrial relations procedures and in line with the formalization of procedures in local government identified by Terry (1982). Nevertheless, it is open to debate whether these bodies were developed solely or even primarily to facilitate the achievement of specific management objectives. Certainly, worker representatives have remained critical of the operation of these bodies, in particular, their ineffectiveness and delay in settling issues. Yet worker issues continued to dominate the proceedings of these meetings and it was the worker representatives who successfully persuaded management to change the name of these bodies to Joint Negotiating Committees eighteen months after they were established(15).

Both of the JNCs, analysed in some depth, considered a broad range of issues and the frequency with which different types of issues tended to arise within each did not vary greatly. There were, however, subtle differences in the operation of these two bodies which indicated that those stewards participating were playing slightly different roles. Although Table 4.4 indicates the similarity in the type of issues discussed, it also suggests a major difference in the volume of issues dealt with. At two Directorate of Technical and Contract Services JNC meetings as many separate issues were discussed as at eight Social Service JNC meetings. This difference was related to the importance of the steward as a provider of issues to be discussed within the JNCs and the efficiency with which this task could be performed. The DTCS

stewards were better able to communicate with members and inform themselves of worker grievances than social service stewards and they were more likely, as noted above, to be present at agenda meetings to present those grievances.

TABLE 4.4 Frequency of Issues Arising

Issue Type

	JNC	
	Social Service (8 meetings)	DTCS (2 meetings)
Health and Safety	1	-
Wages/Pay	5	3
Terms of Employment	1	-
Working Arrangements	8	5
Holidays	2	1
Bonus	-	3
Grading	-	-
Facilities	2	5
Equipment	1	4
Training	-	1
Protective Clothing	2	4
Hours	2	1
Manning	2	1
Miscellaneous	2	-
	28	28

There were slight differences in the number of employer or management side issues emerging within the two JNCs; a greater number appeared within the DTCS JNC. However, as Table 4.5 indicates, employee

stewards were better able to communicate with members and inform themselves of worker grievances than social service stewards and they were more likely, as noted above, to be present at agenda meetings to present those grievances.

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Holidays	2	1
Bonus	-	3
Grading	-	-
Facilities	2	5
Equipment	1	4
Training	-	1
Protective Clothing	2	4
Hours	2	1
Manning	2	1
Miscellaneous	2	-
	28	28

There were slight differences in the number of employer or management side issues emerging within the two JNCs; a greater number appeared within the DTCS JNC. However, as Table 4.5 indicates, employee

issues dominated JNCs proceedings. Despite reservations about their operation the employees still continued to use these bodies.

Table 4.5 Origin of Issues of JNCs

Initiator	JNC	
	Social Service	DTCS
Employers Side Item	1	5
Employee Side Item	27	23

The clearest impression of the role played by the steward within JNCs was gained by consideration of the nature of issues arising. Table 4.6 suggests that stewards were actively pursuing three aspects of their role distinguished in the analytical framework. The number of requests for information, grievances and requests for change emerging from the employee side point to attempts by stewards to fulfil the communication, problem resolution and bargaining aspects of their role[16].

Table 4.6 Nature of Issues Arising

Nature of Issue	JNC	
	Social Services	DTCS
Employer Point of Information	1	2
Employer Request for Information	-	-
Employer Grievance	-	-
Employer Request for Change in Term/Condition	-	3
Employee Point of Information	-	1
Employee Request for Information	10	4
Employee Grievance	7	12
Employee Request for Change in Term/Condition	10	6
Non-Classifable	-	-

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Employee Grievance	7	12
Employee Request for Change in Term/Condition	10	6
Non-Classifable	-	-

Despite attempts by stewards to actively pursue the different aspects of their roles, closer attention needs to be given to the independence displayed by the stewards and their effectiveness within the JNCs. Independence from union full time officials was not in doubt with these officials rarely present at meetings. If any dependence was in evidence, it was upon branch officers who tended to lead discussions and act as 'opinion leaders'. But they did not stifle the contributions from stewards. Discussion within the DTCS JNC, in particular, often involved many of those stewards present.

The effectiveness of stewards within JNCs was open to greater debate. Table 4.7 indicates that progress on requests for changes in terms and conditions of employment was very limited and, given that such requests approximate to bargainable issues, it would seem inaccurate to regard theJNCs as bargaining forums. The ineffectiveness of the Social Service JNC was further confirmed by the fact that of twenty-eight issues emerging, eleven reappeared at three successive meetings. Two issues, union requests for relief staff and rota pay in homes, had not been settled after over a year within the JNC.

Table 4.7 The Handling of Employee Requests for Changes in Terms/ Conditions

Fate of Issue	JNC	
	Social Services	DTCS
Change Secured	2	2
Rejected	5	1
Compromise	-	-
Non-Conclusive	3	3

The limited effectiveness of the JNCs might initially be the cause of some surprise since senior managers with the power to make decisions were entitled to attend and usually did so. In particular, divisional heads and the Principal Assistants (Personnel and Administration) of each directorate were permanent members, the latter being responsible for directorate industrial relations. Amongst the ex officio members, the Chief Personnel Officer or his deputy usually chaired meetings. The Chief Officer of the service directorate was rarely present, but the regular attendance of section heads, such as the cleansing manager, sewers superintendent and the highways superintendent, was significant. This was a particularly important level of management to the workers because they had both the technical expertise and the authority to resolve detailed problems.

It was the accessibility of section head to branch officers in particular, which in part helps account for the delay in settling JNC issues. If a problem did appear at the JNC, it was clearly one which could not be settled quickly and easily by the section head. Such problems might have had wider implications and necessitate lengthy consultation with lower line management or the collection of more detailed information. A further reason for the lack of decisive activity within JNCs was the existence of a related and more effective higher level body, the Joint Works Committee, to which worker representatives preferred to put issues. If issues remained within the JNCs, they were clearly issues which the workers had little chance of advancing within the JWC and were therefore liable to be of a complex, detailed and 'awkward' kind.

The development of the steward's role within the JWC should not

be exaggerated. As already noted, the actual number of stewards participating in this body was small with the union delegation being fixed at nine. However, those stewards who were involved did appear to play a more meaningful role within consultative and bargaining processes than they had within the JNCs. The significance of steward participation within these processes through the JWC was related to the employer side make-up of the JWC. Worker representatives were meeting directly with councillors and, more importantly in the context of Hackney, with councillors of a particular political persuasion.

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 indicate certain similarities in the operation of the JWC and the JNC. While wages and pay issues assumed particular importance within the JWC, possibly reflecting the discretion of councillors on such questions, a wide range of different types of issues were discussed. They were, furthermore, predominantly employee - rather than employer - initiated issues. Less apparent from the tables, but another shared feature, was the independence of stewards from full time officials during proceedings. Although these officials were regular attenders at JWC meetings - at least one was present at four of the five meetings analysed - the role played by them was very much secondary to that of the stewards. Their main value rested in their ability to provide comparative information from other authorities to validate union arguments(17).

Table 4.8 Frequency of Issues Arising in the JWC

Issue Type	No. of Times Arising
Health and Safety	-
Wages and Pay	8
Terms of Employment	5
Working Arrangements	5
Holidays	2
Bonus	2
Gradings	-
Facilities	4
Equipment	-
Training	1
Clothing	1
Hours	1
Manning	2
Miscellaneous	2
	33

Table 4.9 Origin of Issues

Initiator	
Employer Side Item	3
Employee Side Item	29
Origin Indeterminant	1

It is when consideration is given to the nature of the issues arising within the JWC that the major contrast with the JNCs becomes apparent. The JWC provided a forum within which issues of concern to the total manual workforce could be presented. There was no guarantee that issues of such broad concern would arise as it remained conceivable

that proceedings would be wholly taken up with sectional concerns. Table 4.10 indicates that the majority of issues handled within the JWC were of concern to specific groups of workers. The over-representation of the DTCS on the employee side is reflected in the considerable number of issues emerging within the JWC of particular concern to this directorate. It is, however, interesting to note that over a third of the issues were related to the total manual workforce rather than parts of it.

Table 4.10 Section/Directorate Related Issues on the JWC

Section/Directorate	No of Issues Related
DTCS	
All DTCS Workers	1
Specific Sections	11
Social Service Directorate	
All Social Service Workers	1
Specific Sections	2
Housing Directorate	
All Housing Workers	1
Specific Sections	
Chief Executive's Directorate	
All Workers	-
Specific Sections	-
All Authority Workers	14

The most striking feature of the JWC was the remarkable number of employee requests for changes in terms and conditions of employment as indicated in Table 4.11. Of thirty three issues no less than twenty-one were requests for change. Furthermore, it was also apparent, as noted in

Table 4.12, that considerable progress was made on these requests[18]. The requested change was either secured or a compromise reached in well over half the cases.

Table 4.11 Nature of Issues Arising in the JWC

Nature of Issue	No. of Times Arising
Employer Point of Information	2
Employer Request for Information	-
Employer Grievance	-
Employer Request for change term/condition	1
Employee Point of Information	1
Employee Request for Information	3
Employee Grievance	4
Employee Request for change term/condition	21
Non-Classifiable	1

Table 4.12 The Handling of Employee Requests for Changes in Terms and Conditions

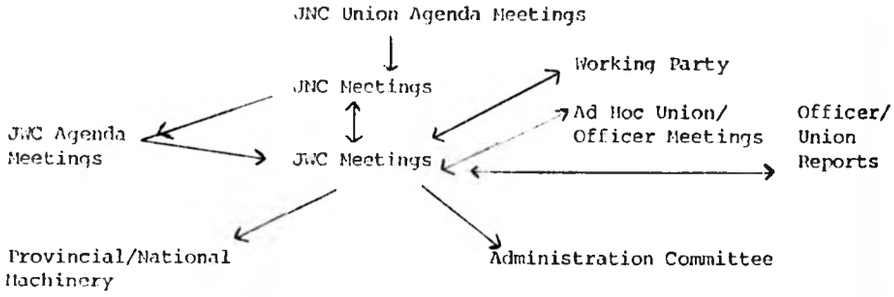
Fate of Issue	
Change Secured	5
Rejected	3
Compromise	5
Non-Conclusive	8

The progress made upon requests reflected the pivotal role played by the JWC in the bargaining processes within the authority. The JWC, in its own right, acted as a decision-making forum within which bargaining definitely took place. Although formally the JWC was only able to make recommendations to the Administration Committee, these were invariably

accepted. Such a relationship between the JWC and the Administration Committee reflected the power of the Chairman of the Employers' Side of the JWC who was also the Chairman of the Administration Committee and could usually carry the day upon most issues. One example of an employee request accepted within the JWC with very little discussion was free meals for luncheon club workers. Other requests, such as the workers' request for a JWC attendance allowance, might involve a more prolonged but nevertheless decisive bargaining process. Discussions on this particular issue were especially interesting, revealing a genuinely 'multilateral' bargaining process. The request was met by a council officer offer of two hours at time-and-a-half and countered by a union request for a flat rate of £6 which finally won the day.

Although the JWC provided a forum within which a decisive bargaining process could take place, it more regularly acted as a 'channel' directing bargaining issues along a number of different avenues. Figure 4.6 below illustrates the range of avenues which were used. It was rare that a decision could be made within the JWC without more detailed information or more detailed discussions. For example, a request emerging from the DTCS JNC for the renegotiation of the highways bonus scheme, once accepted in principle by JWC councillors, was then referred to detailed ad hoc discussions between stewards and work study officers. Similarly the need for more information on the cost of worker requests for improved depot facilities and the laundering of protective clothing, in turn, required reports from council officers to provide the basis for decisions.

Figure 4.6 Flow of Bargainable Issues



The pivotal role played by the JNC in bargaining and consultative processes stemmed from the presence of councillors who were ultimate decision-makers. However, the significant progress made upon worker requests within the JNC was related more directly to the political complexion of these councillors. Although it was generally recognized amongst worker representatives that Labour councillors could be the toughest to deal with because they took an almost paternalistic attitude and argued that they knew best for their workers as 'union men' themselves, there was also a genuine sympathy for many of the worker requests. Such sympathy was integral to a range of councillor attitudes that were generally favourable to steward activity.

Meetings within the JNC between worker representatives and councillors in the presence of senior council officers were not only important in providing an opportunity for council officers to become aware of such sympathies but more significantly, they were crucial in dictating that such sympathies should influence officer behaviour. Officer-Councillor contact on a regular basis was very limited and

confined primarily to the Director of Personnel and the Chairman of the Administration Committee. There was an awareness amongst council officers of the views of the councillors, a recognition that many councillors were themselves active within unions and knowledge of the fact that stewards were coming into contact with councillors informally through such organizations as the local Labour Party. There was also a chance that councillors, constantly in the Town Hall might just come and see them. Such awareness certainly had an influence upon officers. Yet it was the possibility of being criticized by worker representatives and called to account by councillors in the JWC, occurrences not unknown, that in a more practical sense almost forced officers to take account of councillor sympathies.

The backcloth of councillor attitudes and beliefs was consequently important in influencing council officer behaviour. Stewards and branch officers were not given total freedom of action or access, but certain features of steward organization were accepted without question. Thus steward representation, whilst not actively encouraged, was also not discouraged. We have seen how members of management were even prepared to help stewards service members, whilst branch officers, as noted previously as well, were generally granted access to decision-making levels of management[19].

In summary therefore, it was noted that the steward's role as a bargainer had not developed as significantly as expected. This is not to say that certain stewards and branch officers did not participate in bargaining but the number so involved was limited. The lack of decision-making authority of lower line management, the absence of experience amongst stewards, and the consequent reliance upon branch officers, all

restricted the steward's scope for bargaining and confined steward activities primarily to the resolution of individual problems and grievances and to the communication of information.

The tendency for collective issues of any import to be drawn into formal joint structures also placed the handling of such issues beyond the reach of a large majority of stewards. Within the JNCs, attempts were at least being made to pursue the different aspects of the steward's role to the full. As well as seeking to resolve problems, elicit and receive information from management, bargainable issues were emerging. However, it was only within the JWC, in the presence of councillors, that stewards were acting with a significant degree of effectiveness.

It is interesting to note that the steward's role was most developed within one of the two authority level structures open to stewards regardless of grouping. It was stressed that although many issues emerging within the JWC were related to specific occupational, sectional or directorate groupings, a large proportion were also concerned with the whole of the manual workforce. Whether workers were more or less prepared to mobilize in pursuit of specific group aims than in pursuit of more general workforce aims is a question to which attention now turns.

Industrial Action

The successful institutional integration of the many different groupings making up the authority's workforce into a relatively unified steward organization has been noted as an outstanding feature of the Hackney case study. However, consideration of industrial action provides the clearest indication of the parameters of such unity. Was unity of organization reflected in unity of action, workers being prepared to act

in a co-ordinated manner in pursuit of broader objectives? Or was industrial action reserved solely for the pursuit of more parochial and sectional interests?

The 'East End' of London, particularly dockland, has a proud tradition of working class industrial militancy which stretches back to the 1889 Docks Strike. It was a tradition which had shaped the values of many of those employed throughout Hackney and had come to influence their attitudes towards taking part in different forms of industrial activity. Examples were found within Hackney where very specific group interests prompted industrial action. This was particularly seen to be the case in local level action. But there were also many instances where industrial action cut across different groups. Hackney's steward organization was able to mobilize thework-force in a co-ordinated manner and in pursuit of interests beyond the parochial. In considering the efforts made by the steward organization to conduct different forms of industrial action, attention will initially focus upon local level disputes. In the second part of the section, action during the three national disputes of 1969, 1970 and 1979 will be looked at.

During the course of the detailed research, three separate disputes took place, involving three separate groups of workers and different forms of industrial action[20]. It would, however, be a mistake to conjure up a picture of perpetual industrial conflict across the whole of the borough's workforce, or even within parts of it. A differential distribution of industrial muscle was clearly apparent within the workforce and local level action tended to be restricted to specific groups. Altruistic local action was not unknown, but it was

limited. For example, there was little evidence of action by stronger sections of the workforce in support of the objectives of weaker sections and there was an absence of action in pursuit of authority-wide objectives.

As might have been expected, refuse workers in Hackney had been involved in a number of local disputes throughout the 1970s. Yet certain paradoxes in the character of industrial action taken by refuse workers suggested that care was needed before generalizing freely about them. It was clear that Hackney's refuse workers were quite prepared to take action in support of other workers. In 1969, for example, refuse workers at the Millfields Depot had been involved in a two-day token stoppage in support of Lambeth dustmen who were striking over a council decision to cut their 'totting bonus'. As will also become apparent, refuse workers were willing to take industrial action on behalf of other workers during national disputes. However, these same refuse workers could be divided amongst themselves in a most acute and fragmentary manner.

Industrial action amongst Hackney's refuse workers varied considerably between depots. Millfields Depot refuse workers were far more militant than workers in either of the other two cleansing depots. As noted above, they had taken action in support of Lambeth dustmen. In the same year they reacted against the sacking of four colleagues and in a later dispute they struck for the pay they felt entitled to for the May Day they had taken off. Finally, in one of the disputes conducted during research, it was Millfields refuse workers who refused to leave the depot as a protest against poor depot facilities. On each of these occasions refuse workers from the other depots had failed to take action. A quite bitter rivalry had, partly as a result, tended to arise between depots. This rivalry was further reinforced by differences in union membership

between depots. The refuse workers therefore presented an example of conflict within just one occupational group on the basis of the very specific entity of the depot[21].

The other two disputes observed during research reflected a much more unified approach. The 'work to rule' by housing estate cleaners in pursuit of an additional 'dirty payment' was interesting in two respects. Firstly, it illustrated the ability of the three manual unions to co-operate effectively amongst workers where each had sizable concentrations of membership. More significantly, it also provided an indication of the effectiveness of steward organization in mobilizing and co-ordinating one of the most isolated and scattered groups of workers. Almost all the authority's estate cleaners, normally dispersed throughout the borough and working in very small groups or alone, were able to come together at a mass meeting, decide on a form of action and pursue it successfully.

The final dispute represented the clearest example of local action by a particular group of workers on behalf of others. As already briefly mentioned, this involved building craftsmen and a small group of manual workers and raised the possibility of co-ordinating action through the JSSC. To support the position of the building craftsmen, stores workers prevented the distribution of provisions to mobile patrol workers carrying out building worker tasks.

Unity and co-ordination amongst Hackney's manual workforce was most apparent during the three national disputes distinguished in the introduction to this section. Of these disputes, that of 1969 was the most narrowly based, not only within Hackney, but throughout the country. Although some workers from different occupational groups and from

different parts of the country were involved, it was confined mainly to refuse workers within the London Boroughs. The dispute started in Hackney, with the authority's refuse workers willing to act immediately upon a branch resolution calling for a £20 basic wage. However, in its authority of origin the dispute did not spread beyond refuse workers, Shoreditch roadsweepers and highway workers.

The 1970 dispute, in contrast, involved widespread action amongst many different groupings across the authority. Refuse workers along with market sweepers were the first to come out on all-out strike in Hackney, stressing the importance of their action for other groups as well as themselves. The Hillfields Depot steward was reported to have stated in the Hackney Gazette (23.10.70) that, 'You have to remember that we are not striking for dustmen and roadsweepers, we are also striking on behalf of people like kitchen porters and hospital workers who only get £12'. The refuse workers were subsequently joined in their action by a wide range of different occupational groups including parks workers, road-sweepers, toilet attendants and estate cleaners.

The national disputes of 1969 and 1970 took place before steward organization had developed to any significant extent within Hackney. These disputes had seen the manual workforce act with enthusiasm but certainly not in a unified and co-ordinated way. The 1978-79 'winter of discontent' dispute was pursued in a completely different manner. It was a dispute conducted with remarkable sophistication and control by the steward organization at the level of the authority. It lasted nine weeks within Hackney, three weeks longer than the national dispute, gradually incorporating all sections of the workforce and finally achieving the £60 minimum wage and a 36 hour week which were the key

elements of the national claim.

Following the January 22 Day of Action, which was supported by most of the authority's workforce, the 1979 campaign was conducted by the union side of the JWC acting as a strike committee. Their activities were punctuated by regular meetings of all stewards and mass meetings to take major decisions. The campaign itself was based upon a gradual escalation of strike activity. Strategic groups of workers, such as refuse drivers and stores workers, were the first to take action and were supported by a levy on the rest of the workforce. Other groups of workers were gradually called out including highway drivers and even some home helps. The final three weeks of the dispute were marked by an all-out strike of the total manual workforce.

The 1979 dispute provided a useful indication of the need for a certain pre-existing level of steward organization before such action could effectively be undertaken. Yet the dispute also made apparent the significance of such events for the future development of organization. The 1979 campaign can be identified as the 'take-off' point for Hackney's steward organization in a number of crucial respects. It has already been noted that the JSSC was created as a conscious response to the dispute. Of greater significance was the effect upon steward representation. The emergence of no less than eight stewards could be related directly to the dispute: three social service homes stewards, four home help stewards and the toilet attendant steward.

The action in itself affected a wide range of workers previously untouched by many industrial relations processes within the authority. An awareness of being part of an authority workforce was forced upon such

workers. The manner in which the dispute was conducted was also crucially important in producing such a decisive influence upon steward representation. Previously scattered and isolated groups of workers were brought together, often for the first time, at mass meetings. Branch officers were quick to use this opportunity to suggest and encourage the election of stewards. For example, the toilet attendants and home helps were held back after meetings for the very purpose of electing stewards. The decision to levy workers in support of those on strike and the need for individuals to collect such money also prompted the emergence of stewards. One of the collectors arranged the election of stewards in a number of the social service homes he visited.

The 1979 dispute was, therefore, a crucial event in the history of Hackney's steward organization. In particular, it served to encourage further development, especially in representation, and thereby strengthen organization. However, what was perhaps most noteworthy was the ability of the workforce to mobilize to take action in the first place. It was the clearest example of the existence of an effective authority-wide steward organization incorporating all the groups making up the workforce.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summarizing the character of steward organization within Hackney, two essential features stand out: firstly, the importance of the authority as an entity upon which organization could develop and operate; and, secondly, the success such organization achieved in integrating the very many occupational, functional and organizational groups making up the manual workforce. It would not, in other words, be inappropriate to classify Hackney's steward organization as a 'unified-authority' organization.

The significance of the authority as a basis for organization was fully reflected in its importance as a basis for steward representation. Certainly a wide range of steward types were found within Hackney, the very diversity of groups within the workforce provided opportunities for representation to develop along many lines. However, the authority remained a viable and crucial entity for those workers still unwilling or unable to elect lower level stewards.

The authority also emerged as the key entity underpinning the formal structures of steward interaction. A number of these structures, such as those based upon union and directorate, were only accessible to stewards from a particular group. This increased the likelihood of allegiance to or identity within this specific group. Yet, it was also apparent that these groups cut across rather than reinforced one another and, perhaps more importantly, there were more broadly based structures open to stewards regardless of groups, which served to facilitate the process of integration.

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It was interesting to note that the steward's role was most developed within one of these 'open' bodies, namely the Joint Works Committee. The role of most stewards outside the JWC was seen to be limited primarily to problem-resolution and communication of information. It was only when meeting with councillors that a more meaningful involvement in consultation and bargaining on collective issues could take place.

The best illustration of the effective unity of Hackney's steward organization was the manner in which the 1979 dispute was conducted. Local action based upon more parochial interests could fragment the workforce to a considerable extent. The potential for such fragmentation was apparent in the actions of the refuse collectors, with rivalaries in this instance taking place within just one occupational group. Yet the sophisticated campaign of 1979 showed just how capable the authority's steward organization was of mobilizing Hackney's total manual workforce.

Two structural features of the authority appeared to have a significant impact upon steward organization: the size of the authority and the functions it carried out. The importance of the authority as a basis for organization appeared to be closely related to its size and especially to its compactness. A workplace the size of the geographical area representing the Borough of Hackney did present problems for the development of organization. Note was made of certain 'authority stewards' who had difficulty servicing members, how informal networks of contact could not easily develop, and how attendance at many formal steward meetings was low given the very generous time-off provisions. Nonetheless, the authority remained of a size which made it a viable entity upon which to base steward structures and an effective level at which to operate.

The occupational composition of the workforce is closely related to the functions performed by the authority. The considerable range of services provided by Hackney was reflected in an occupationally diverse workforce. As stressed, this did not prevent the emergence of a unified organization but the kind of workers employed had some effect upon the character of this organization. Organization was seen to have developed at an uneven pace with full-time male occupational groups tending to organize prior to part-time female groups. Furthermore, the presence of refuse collectors was crucial to the type of industrial action that could be taken by the organization in pursuit of its aims. Refuse workers were seen to promote parochial interests but they had also been integrated into the authority's steward organization. The harnessing of their power had allowed them to act as a vanguard for the rest of the workforce on a number of occasions.

Management influence upon steward organization within Hackney was apparent but it was not as powerful or as blatantly exerted as implied by Terry (1982). Steward organization identified could not be interpreted as organization sponsored by management to facilitate the achievement of its objectives. Where managers had exercised their influence, they had done so in a much more subtle manner.

The subtlety of management's influence was perhaps best illustrated by its effect upon the development of steward representation. Although no direct attempt was made by management to influence either the number or types of steward, it was clear from the entities and groupings upon which steward constituencies were based that management structure and the organization of work had been of major importance in shaping the character of representation. At the simplest level, the number of depots,

old people's homes and baths, determined the number of stewards that could conceivably emerge. In other instances, it was noted that representation was based upon management's functional divisions such as the section, or organizational structures such as the area office. Management decisions to create these divisions and structures influenced numbers and types of stewards.

Management attitudes had a far from straightforward influence upon steward organization. In analysing the relationship between councillors and council officers, it became clear that although councillors had very little contact with officers and played only a very limited part in day to day industrial relations, their views and broader political understandings were well to the fore in influencing officer behaviour. Whilst aware of councillor union sympathies and the informal contact taking place between certain stewards and councillors, there was a very real possibility of council officers being called to account at JWC meetings. Although not explicitly encouraging stewards, the atmosphere generally pervading within Hackney was therefore conducive to steward activity. More concretely, this manifested itself in the union membership agreement, generous time-off provisions for meetings and other activities, as well as significant access for branch officeholders to senior management levels.

Despite this favourable atmosphere, the development of consultation and bargaining appeared to have rather a limited effect upon steward organization. The majority of stewards were not involved to any significant extent in either of these processes. Bargaining and consultation were confined primarily to formal structures and involved the few stewards and branch officers participating in them. Even the introduction of bonus schemes had not radically altered this situation as branch officers took

the leading part in their negotiation.

The effect of the range of factors related to the trade unions upon steward organization in Hackney might at first sight appear somewhat ambiguous. The combination of multi-unionism and 'authority-orientated' branches could be seen to represent a formula for the fragmentation of steward organization along union lines. In analysing patterns of representation, the importance of union grouping as the basis of constituencies was stressed. During periods of industrial action union differences reinforced depot allegiances producing conflict between refuse workers, whilst of all the forums within which stewards could interact, those based upon the union provided the widest scope for significant numbers of stewards to meet.

However, the influence of 'authority-orientated' branches was stronger in creating a unified and integrated steward organization than in fragmenting it. The existence of branch structures mirroring the authority did at least provide an opportunity for significant numbers of stewards to meet. At such meetings, it was possible to devote time solely to the consideration of local authority issues and not just those which related to the particular union alone. In this way issues of concern to the whole of the workforce or particular sections of it could be discussed regardless of union membership. The nature of the branches also allowed officers to play key roles within steward organization.

The involvement of full time union officers was limited in Hackney. There was certainly no evidence of management trying to by-pass stewards by going to FTOs over their heads and therefore encouraging dependence. However, there was considerable reliance

upon branch officers. There is a strong likelihood that stewards and workers within any authority will show a degree of dependence upon certain central figures. Stewards and workers will be dispersed throughout the authority, separated from one another and from centres of management decision-making. In Hackney branch officers represented the hub of organization; it was they who, through their mobility and accessibility, maintained an authority level organization. It was they also, who through their continual interaction with one another on a daily basis helped to integrate the different union steward bodies into a unified organization. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that branch officers could be catalysts in encouraging the election of stewards amongst scattered groups of workers.

The creation of a unified and integrated authority steward organization within Hackney cannot, therefore, be explained by any one single factor. Clearly, there has been a complex interaction between a range of factors. Structural features of the authority enhanced the feasibility of such an organization emerging, whilst factors related to the unions themselves, particularly the nature of branches, proved important to the development and operation of such an organization. The influence of management was far from straightforward. Certainly, the relationship between council officers and councillors produced an atmosphere favourable to steward organization, but in Hackney, the development of steward organization was not based on any form of 'management sponsorship'.

NOTES

1. A review of the management structure was underway during research. A separate Leisure and Recreation Directorate was subsequently established removing parks, baths and library workers from their previous directorates into a unified one.

2. Such a geographical pattern of union membership was also identified in Richmond. The TGWU dominated membership in the old metropolitan authority of Twickenham, NUPE dominated old Richmond and GMWU old Barnes.

3. Establishment was defined as any structure fixed at a given point within which workers carried out their tasks.

4. This relates to the geographical pattern of membership within the authority. Those depots within the Shoreditch area were dominated by the TGWU, those in Stoke Newington by GMWU, and those in old Hackney by NUPE.

5. It is interesting to note that in Richmond the dominance of the TGWU in the Twickenham cleansing depot had produced one TGWU steward. On reorganization in 1964, Richmond and Barnes had been amalgamated producing a multi-union depot and the election of both a NUPE and GMWU steward.

6. This discrepancy between allocated and effective steward constituencies in part became apparent as a result of the differences in constituency sizes being accredited to the same steward. Information on constituency size was gained from three sources, a general questionnaire conducted at at NUPE Branch Committee Meeting, from NUPE Area office records and from in-depth steward interviews. Discrepancies between what stewards felt their constituencies sizes to be and what the branch thought they were, reflected in area office records, were apparent.

7. The NUPE average was calculated on the basis of four meetings and that of the TGWU on five meetings. Only one GMWU branch meeting was scheduled during research and that did not take place since only the branch chairman, branch secretary and one other member turned up.

8. A detailed analysis of the NUPE District Committee was not felt to be necessary. The character of this body reflected the rather unusual situation in Hackney whereby a fairly strong NUPE Officers' Branch was to be found within the authority with views and policies particularly at odds with those of the NUPE manual branch. Although the District Committee provided an opportunity for five of the manual branch stewards to interact with one another, they were doing so

within a body which acted primarily as a forum within which rivalries and antagonisms between the two branches could be given full vent.

9. This was the average over five meetings. Interestingly, on the return visit to Hackney attendance at such a meeting was twenty-three. Given the rise in the number of stewards in the interval between research and this latter visit, some questions might be raised about the commitment of new stewards and indeed, of the long serving stewards.

10. Such decisions usually took the form of recommendations to full branch meetings which were invariably accepted.

11. When one talks about the representativeness of the worker delegation to the J.C, the question immediately raised is representative of what? Certainly, it may be argued that the predominance of DTCS representatives was a fair reflection of the distribution of industrial power within the manual workforce.

12. This was made clear at the Branch District Committee at which the J.C delegation was elected. The NUPE Branch Secretary stressed that a delegate should be elected to represent social services.

13. Fryer et al also noted that stewards spent much time dealing with such misunderstandings. However, they tended to treat the handling of such issues as an indication of an increasing bargaining role. It is debatable whether dealing with misunderstandings always or very often required bargaining.

14. Less than 10 percent of the sample of Hackney stewards had more than four years experience as stewards. Interestingly, this is much lower than the core of experience noted by Brown et al (1978) for their local government sample. The difference may be explained by the rapid and recent increase in the number of Hackney stewards.

15. This change of name should not be viewed merely as cosmetic. In the eyes of worker representatives at least it was an important change. It certainly influenced the type of issues that could be raised at JNCs and also placed them in a position of countering any officer suggestion that the JNCs were merely consultative.

16. The slight differences apparent in the table are explained in a number of ways. The greater number of social service requests for changes in terms and conditions in part reflected the attempt to gain benefits already achieved within the DTCS. The larger volume of DTCS grievances was a consequence of the many employee complaints about depot facilities.

17. At one J/C meeting, for example, the TGWU FTO compared the Hackney bonus payments unfavourably to those awarded in a neighbouring authority.

18. Table 4.12 noting the fate of issues takes into account the different ways such issues might finally be settled. Thus issues are classified according to how they were finally dealt with.

19. This cannot be interpreted as a completely neutral attitude. In an environment which is 'structurally biased' against the emergence of stewards, the taking of a 'non-attitude' preserves a situation where representation is poorly developed. Nevertheless, if representation can be stimulated, as it was in Hackney, this attitude does not inhibit the election of stewards.

20. Management did not keep detailed records on industrial action.

21. Similar differences in behaviour were found amongst refuse workers in different cleansing depots in Richmond.

CHAPTER 5

THE NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTY COUNCIL OF DORSET

Dorset represented a rural county covering an area of 655,766 acres with a population of 591,000. It covered eight separate district councils: Pool, Bournemouth, Purbeck, Weymouth, West Dorset, North Dorset, Wimbourne and Christchurch. The county lacked an urban or industrial centre of any significance, the nearest perhaps being Poole or Bournemouth. Dorset's economy was based principally upon agriculture, quarrying and consumer services with tourism its largest industry.

Spread across the large geographical area which constituted Dorset County Council (DCC) were the council's 20,598 workers. Of this total, 6,931 were teachers and lecturers, 1,287 police, 316 firemen and 4,501 administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees. The manual workforce represented the largest single group, a total of 7,563 in 1980.

The political complexion of the council reflected the socio-economic background of the authority and area. Seventy-eight of the ninety-one council seats were held by the Conservatives, five by Labour, four by the Liberals and four by independents. Three of the service committees within which councillors organized themselves were responsible for the functions employing manual workers throughout the county: the Education Committee, the Social Service Committee and the Planning and Transportation Committee. The key strategic and policy-making committee was the Policy and Resources Committee. Of particular interest and importance was the absence of a separate personnel committee or even a sub-committee specifically responsible for the personnel function. The

Co-Ordination Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Committee was the key committee in this respect. Although having the much broader brief - to consider 'the principal objectives and priorities of the authority' and 'assessing overall requirements, including manpower for all services' - it was also more specifically responsible 'for recruitment, pay, allowances, expenses, superannuation, training, conditions of service, accommodation and dismissal of employees of the council'.

Management and the Organization of Work

The DCC workforce was organized within three separate departments: Transportation and Engineering (T and E), Education, and Social Services. As indicated in Table 5.1, the smallest of these departments, employing a full time male workforce, was Transport and Engineering. In contrast, the two largest employers of manual workers, the Social Service and Education Departments, employed very large numbers of part-time females. Indeed, the most striking characteristic of the DCC manual workforce was the predominance of part-time females.

Table 5.1 Departmental Structure and Related Workforces

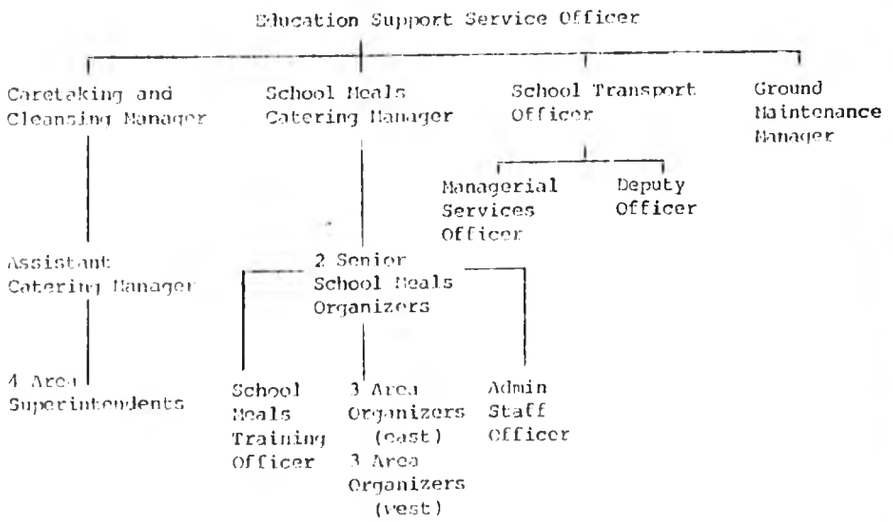
Department	Full-Time Manuals	Part-Time Manuals
Transportation and Engineering	286	6
Social Services	400	1,823
Education	1,000 (approx)	2,500 (approx)
	1,686	4,323

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 below give some indication of the range of occupational groups within the departments. The four sections under the responsibility of the Education Supports Officer covered caretakers and

cleaners, school meals workers, school transport and school grounds maintenance workers. The Transportation and Engineering Department was made up of a less diversified range of occupational groups with most workers employed in tasks related to highway work. The County Repair Depot (CRD) employed mainly engineering craftsmen. In the Social Service Department, interest was focused primarily upon two groups, home helps and residential home workers.

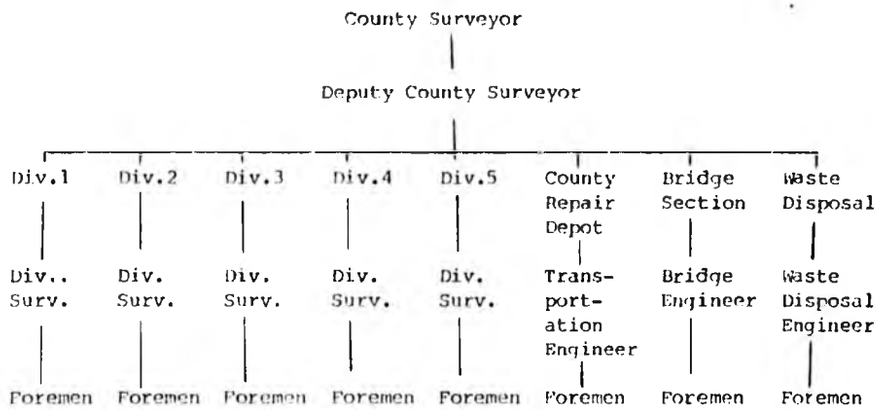
Figure 5.1

Education Department (management structure covering manuals)



Source: Education Department

Figure 5.2 Transportation and Engineering Departments



The figures reveal an interesting feature of management structure; namely that responsibilities were based upon specific geographical areas. The authority covered a large geographical area and it had been decided to break down management responsibilities in this way. In the Education Department, lower line management in both the Caretaking and Cleaning Section and the School Meals Section was based upon area, whilst in the T and E Department the authority had been divided into five geographical divisions, each with their own management hierarchy.

Three non-service departments were also of particular relevance in the Dorset case study; the Treasurer's, Chief Executive's and Personnel Departments. Financial planning and control inevitably involved the Treasurer's Department in industrial relations processes. The Chief Executive's Department, although not employing manual workers, did contain the Management Services Unit (MSU). This unit was directly responsible for handling the design and implementation of bonus shcemes and thus its work was bound to have some effect on the bargaining aspect of the steward's role. The Personnel Department was, of course, central

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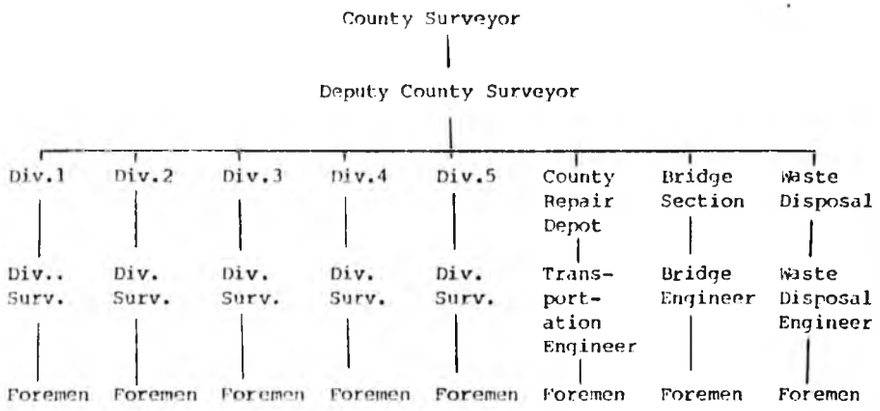

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to the analysis, for it dealt with the wide range of personnel issues under the control of the Co-Ordination Sub-Committee.

The Trade Unions

Four unions were recognized for manual workers within Dorset; NUPE, TGWU, GMWU and also the National Union of Agricultural and Allied Workers (NUAAW)[1]. Table 5.2 presents the membership levels of the different unions and the number of stewards recognized in DCC.

Table 5.2 DCC Manual Workers Union Membership and Steward Numbers

Union	Members	Stewards
NUPE	1,316	70
GMWU	421	14
TGWU	157	10
NUAAW	25	4
	1,919	98

Source: Personnel Department

The dominance of NUPE overall is apparent, although it varied between departments. It was most complete within the Social Service Department. In the Education Department, NUPE was the key union with the GMWU and TGWU having a limited presence. The only genuinely multi-union department, in the sense that all four unions had membership concentrations, was the T and E Department.

As striking as NUPE's dominance was the very low level of union density amongst the manual workforce. On the basis of the figures presented above, the density was about 25 percent. Obviously, a union membership agreement had not been signed, nor, given such a density

level, was one likely to be introduced in the foreseeable future.

Figure 5.3 below illustrates the complexity of branch structure and suggests the need to distinguish between the organization of NUPE and the GMWU in Dorset. It also illustrates most strikingly the absence of branches mirroring the county council and covering DCC workers alone. The importance of branches spanning only specific parts of the total area representing the county is clear. The GMWU, in common with the TGWU and NUAAW, had branches based upon vaguely defined geographical areas which incorporated workers from a range of industries within these areas. This range would include those working for the district, as well as the county council, and this might produce a sizable concentration of local government workers within a branch. This was certainly the case in the GMWU Bournemouth Branch. Overall, however, DCC workers represented only a very small proportion of total branch membership in all the Dorset GMWU branches.

Figure 5.3 Branch Structure

NUPE

Wimbourne Branch (created from Wimbourne Education Branch & Wimbourne members from Wimbourne and Blandford Branch)	Purbeck Branch	West Dorset Branch	Poole Branch (created from amalgamation of Poole Parks & Poole Education Branches)	Bournemouth & Christ-Church Branch	Weymouth Branch (local government members of old Weymouth General including also hospital workers)	North Dorset Branch (absorbed Blandford members from Wimbourne and Blandford Branch)
Branch District Committee (monthly)		Branch District Committee (ad hoc)	Branch District Committee (monthly)		Branch District Committee (quarterly)	Branch District Committee (ad hoc)

GMWU

Bournemouth Branch (Branch size 1700 DCC members 220)	Weymouth Branch (Branch Size 800 DCC members 140)	Bridport Branch (Branch size 300 DCC members 50)	Dorchester Branch (inactive branch)
Local Government Stewarst Meetings (ad hoc)		Branch Committee (no local government specific structures)	

In contrast, the NUPE branch structure stood out as much more 'rationally' organized, being based upon the district councils found within the county boundaries. This structure had not emerged 'overnight' as a response to the reorganization of NUPE. A range of different types of branches incorporating workers from just one occupational group, from groups within both local government and the health service, and from various geographical areas, had existed prior to 1974 and some survived for a number of years after. The efforts of the Area Officer responsible

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for Dorset had gradually produced a branch structure mirroring the employing district authorities. Absent, however, was a branch for DCC workers. County workers as a result had been placed in the same branches as district council employees. In comparison with Hackney, Dorset County branches did not cover the authority, they did not incorporate authority workers alone and, as will become apparent, branch officers were not always DCC employees.

Turning to joint machinery, it needs to be stressed at the outset that Dorset County Council did not have a body equivalent to Hackney's JCC within which worker representatives from throughout the manual workforce could meet with councillors. Worker-Councillor organized contact was restricted solely to worker deputations which councillors were at liberty to refuse or accept. Joint machinery was primarily confined to workers' representatives and council officers. Six Joint Consultative Committees had been set up, although their form and coverage varied. Two were based upon the department, namely the Roadmen JCC, covering highway workers, waste disposal workers and county repair depot workers (i.e. all those within the T and E Department), and the Social Services JCC. Two others were based upon divisions within the Education Department; these were the County Establishments JCC, primarily covering caretakers and cleaners but also school transport and grounds maintenance workers, and the School Meals JCC. There was also a much more narrowly based JCC covering manual workers within Weymouth College. The final JCC was an 'umbrella' body allowing representatives from these different JCCs to meet with officers to consider broader issues. With the exception of the latter body, the five other JCCs met on a quarterly basis, although emergency JCCs could be called or planned meetings cancelled in the absence of an agenda.

To summarize, workplace organization in Dorset was developing amongst a workforce employed by a strong Conservative Council, organized within three major manual departments and belonging to four unions with 'non-authority orientated' branches. It was a workforce scattered over a large geographical area and fragmented institutionally as well as occupationally. It was also a workforce which through its representatives had some formal access to management, but limited direct and formal contact with councillors.

PATTERNS OF STEWARD ORGANIZATION

Types of Steward

Steward representation had developed amongst DCC manual workers throughout the 'seventies, but its emergence had been both patchy in terms of its coverage, and erratic in that it appeared to have occurred in short bursts of activity rather than gradually throughout the decade. The patchiness of representation was reflected in the fact that eighteen separate stewards were found to be representing just 292 T and E Department workers, whilst there were sixty-eight stewards representing 3,500 education workers in 208 establishments and only eleven stewards representing 2,200 social service workers. The spasmodic development of representation was revealed in the co-existence of a significant core of long standing stewards with a number of stewards emerging in the relatively recent past. At least ten new NUPE stewards, three GMWU stewards and all four NUAAW stewards had emerged during 1978-80.

A broad range of steward types representing different groups of workers were identified in Dorset as in Hackney. However, it is clear from Table 5.3 that the steward types distinguished in Dorset differed

in certain respects from those found in Hackney. A number of the 'entities' distinguished as the bases of representation in Hackney, such as the establishment, the depot and management defined areas, were also of significance in shaping Dorset steward constituencies. Yet in the absence of authority-wide steward representation, lower level 'entities' within the boundaries of the county clearly assumed greater significance.

Table 5.3 DCC Steward Types

Entity	Group	Member Characteristics
Establishment	(a) multi occupation (b) multi section (c) sectional group	static workers
Depot	(a) single section (b) union group	mobile workers
Management Geographical Division	(a) single section	mobile workers
District	(a) occupation (b) section (c) isolated individuals by occupation or section	isolated/scattered workers static workers
Miscellaneous Geographical Area	(a) occupation (b) section (c) isolated individuals by occupation or section	isolated/scattered workers static workers

The pattern of representation for certain establishment workers in Dorset was rather more complex than in Hackney. Domestics and care assistants working in old people's homes in Dorset were represented by the same type of steward as were similar occupational groups in Hackney. In other words, they had one steward responsible for both groups of workers. In Dorset schools, however, the situation was somewhat different.

In most cases it was possible to identify school meals workers, caretakers and cleaners and, less generally, groundsmen, all from distinct sections of the Education Department. A number of stewards were found representing all these workers on the basis of the school, regardless of their section. In these instances the school had just one manual worker steward. However, 'sectional' stewards, representing either school meals workers or caretakers and cleaners alone, were also in evidence, in which case a school might have two manual stewards. The emergence of distinct 'sectional' stewards was significantly related to the organization of work within these two sections. Work times for cleaners and school meals workers dictated that they rarely, if ever, met one another. Indeed, given that the caretaker was the only link between these two sections, being present in the school throughout the day, it was not surprising that where a single 'establishment' steward representing both sections had emerged, it was he who usually assumed the role.

The depot was found to be a significant basis for steward representation, particularly amongst highway workers. However, for this group of workers there was an alternative entity upon which highway stewards could base their constituencies, namely the management defined geographical division. The geographical division had been of particular importance in the early stages of development in representation. Regardless of how many separate depots might exist within any single division, a first priority had been to establish at least one steward per highway division. The significance of the division was further enhanced by the fact that 'worker representatives' introduced in the mid-seventies to deal with bonus issues were appointed on the basis of division rather than depot. The relevance of the depot was not merely

historical. The 'worker representatives' continued to operate in a manner distinctive from that of the steward. It was also possible to identify a single steward in one division representing workers within all three depots covered by it. Yet the depot had certainly become the key basis of representation for highway workers in Dorset.

The scope for further development in representation based upon groups within depots was limited. As indicated in Table 5.4, highway depots tended to be composed of only one sectional group of workers. The only group which could conceivably be exploited to refine constituencies was union membership. Multi-union divisions were not uncommon but multi-union depots were. Indeed, only one depot was identified as having produced separate NUPE, TGWU and NUAAW stewards.

The importance of the establishment, the depot and the division as the basis for steward representation conformed to expectations generated from the analysis of representation in Hackney. Moving beyond these entities, however, it was possible to identify structures shaping constituencies in Dorset which were not present in Hackney. As suggested briefly above, these entities took the form of geographical units or areas below the level of the authority and defined with varying degrees of precision. Such units formed the basis of representation primarily for those education workers, and to a lesser extent social service workers, not covered by 'establishment' stewards. The importance of stewards representing workers across these miscellaneous geographical areas might be gauged by the fact that exactly half of the caretaker stewards interviewed expressed that they had members beyond the schools in which they worked.

The most precise of the geographical units identified was the 'district' mirroring the area covered by the union branch. The union branch proved to be a forum of some significance in the election of certain stewards(?). In the absence of stewards representing more tightly defined lower level entities, the tendency was for the branch to appoint stewards acting as representatives for all workers within a particular group throughout the district. For example, a single steward was found representing school meals staff in all schools within the area covered by the NUPE Wimbourne Branch. Similarly, a GMWU steward represented all caretakers and cleaners within the area covered by his Bournemouth branch. The one and only home help steward represented a district also, in that she serviced all home helps within the area previously covered by the now defunct Wimbourne and Blandford NUPE Branch. In certain instances district representation broadened beyond the section. For example, stewards at this level were found representing all workers from the Education Department. It was even possible to identify figures, very often branch officers, who represented workers from a range of different departments. It was a role summed up concisely by the North Dorset Branch Secretary who stated, 'What any steward don't cover, I do'.

Expediency played a crucial part in determining steward constituencies in Dorset and this was particularly the case for education workers. The emergence of individuals prepared to take on the steward's role did on occasion lead to the breaking down of constituencies based upon district into smaller geographical units. However, the nature of the areas covered was determined more by the convenience to the steward than by any specific or objective criteria. For example, a NUPE steward in the Weymouth Branch represented all

schools manual workers within the town of Portland. Two stewards within the NUPE North Dorset Branch divided the town of Dorchester in half with each steward representing school workers within their respective areas. To quote further examples, one school caretaker steward represented schools in three schools 'within walking distance' of his own, and the two Poole school meals stewards similarly represented workers accessible to them.

The emergence of the district and a range of other miscellaneous geographical areas as entities upon which representation could be based in Dorset was clearly related both to difficulties in persuading members to become stewards and to practical difficulties in electing stewards within certain working environments. In Hackney this combination of factors had led to the appointment of 'authority stewards', made easier by the existence of authority branches. With the total authority unviable as a meaningful basis for either branches or steward constituencies in Dorset, lower level entities, in particular the district and related units, were adopted as the basis for representation.

Why had not more stewards emerged in Dorset? The apathy of members could not be completely ignored, but it was clear that certain structural features of the work situation inhibited the emergence of a greater number of 'establishment' stewards. This became apparent through the remarkably low average constituency size of 19 for Dorset stewards. This average was partly a consequence of the fact that the number of workers needing representation was not great given low union density. However, it was also clear that, although covering geographical areas comprising a number of establishments, stewards were only picking up very small concentrations of employees. It was not feasible for the small

groups of employees found within village establishments to elect stewards of their own.

The most striking feature of the pattern of representation identified in Dorset was therefore the existence of this range of alternative geographical units, above the level of the establishment and the depot, but below the level of the authority, forming the basis of steward constituencies. These geographical entities were defined with varying degrees of precision. They were significantly related to the branch, reflecting the importance of the branch in the appointment of stewards, and often mirrored the area covered by the branch. However, they were also defined according to expediency and corresponded to areas stewards were prepared to cover.

Types of Steward Organization

Steward organization within Dorset County Council had failed to integrate a geographically scattered and occupationally diverse range of workers into a unified authority-wide organization. The authority, the key entity upon which Hackney's stewards organization had been based, was of limited importance in Dorset. Organization based upon geographical areas below the level of the authority, and open to particular groups of stewards, provided by far the greatest opportunities for stewards to meet. Union membership was an especially significant basis for steward interaction. The incidence of steward interaction within cross-cutting structures such as the departmental and sectional JCCs was not frequent enough to undermine union allegiance. Perhaps of even greater relevance was the absence of effective authority-wide structures open to all stewards, regardless of group, which could help in the integration of stewards into a unified organization.

This section focuses initially upon the limited informal interaction taking place between stewards within DCC. Attention then turns to steward interaction on the basis of union membership in, for example, branch meetings and branch committees. Consideration of the Joint Consultative Committees and the Joint Trade Union Liason Committee (JTUIC) concentrates on the ineffectiveness of these bodies in providing major opportunities for steward interaction and especially, their failure to encourage the emergence of a more unified organization.

Informal interaction of either an unorganized or organized kind amongst stewards in Dorset was extremely limited. Opportunities for stewards to develop relationships with one another were rare. Establishments or depots composed of more than one or two stewards were not common. Even where a number of stewards existed contact was restricted. In schools, where the ever-present caretaker represented both caretakers and cleaners, contact with the school meals steward was possible. However, where a number of stewards were found in particular depots they were likely to be scattered over geographical area returning on a irregular basis. In contrast to depot workers in Hackney, Dorset highway workers tended to be involved in long term projects, returning daily to the project site rather than to the depot.

If any networks of contact developed at all, they tended to be amongst stewards sitting upon JCCs. For example, some informal telephone contact was identified amongst three caretaker stewards on the County Establishments JCC. Although bringing only a limited number of stewards together, it was the very existence of this formal body which at least allowed personalized relationships to develop, with the

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possibility of informal interaction outside of it.

The informal interaction of an organized kind, which in Hackney was based primarily upon bonus negotiations, is best considered when attention turns to interaction within JCCs. Stewards were involved in discussions related to bonus but these discussions were procedurally linked very closely to the operation of the JCCs. For example, bonus working parties composed of representatives from the JCCs tended to be appointed by the JCCs themselves. Only one bonus scheme, involving highway workers, had encouraged a significant degree of organized informal contact distinct from consultative bodies. 'Worker representatives' met on quite a regular basis, although in an informal atmosphere, with management to discuss issues specifically related to the scheme, and certain stewards doubled-up as both 'worker representatives and stewards.

Ad hoc meetings of stewards at the level of the authority had taken place but they were rare. Only two examples of such meetings could be cited, both stimulated by the need for discussion on the implications of council 'cuts'. The first involved all GMWU DCC stewards; the second, which had not been well attended, was open to all authority stewards.

One of the more notable features of informal interaction within Dorset was the limited branch officer-steward contact. Certainly, individual stewards were more likely to be in contact with the branch secretary than with one another. Faced with an intractable issue, stewards often approached the branch secretary. However, branch officers in DCC were not particularly mobile or accessible and their effectiveness in quickly resolving problems was not great. This limited effectiveness stemmed in large part from the substantial geographical distance between

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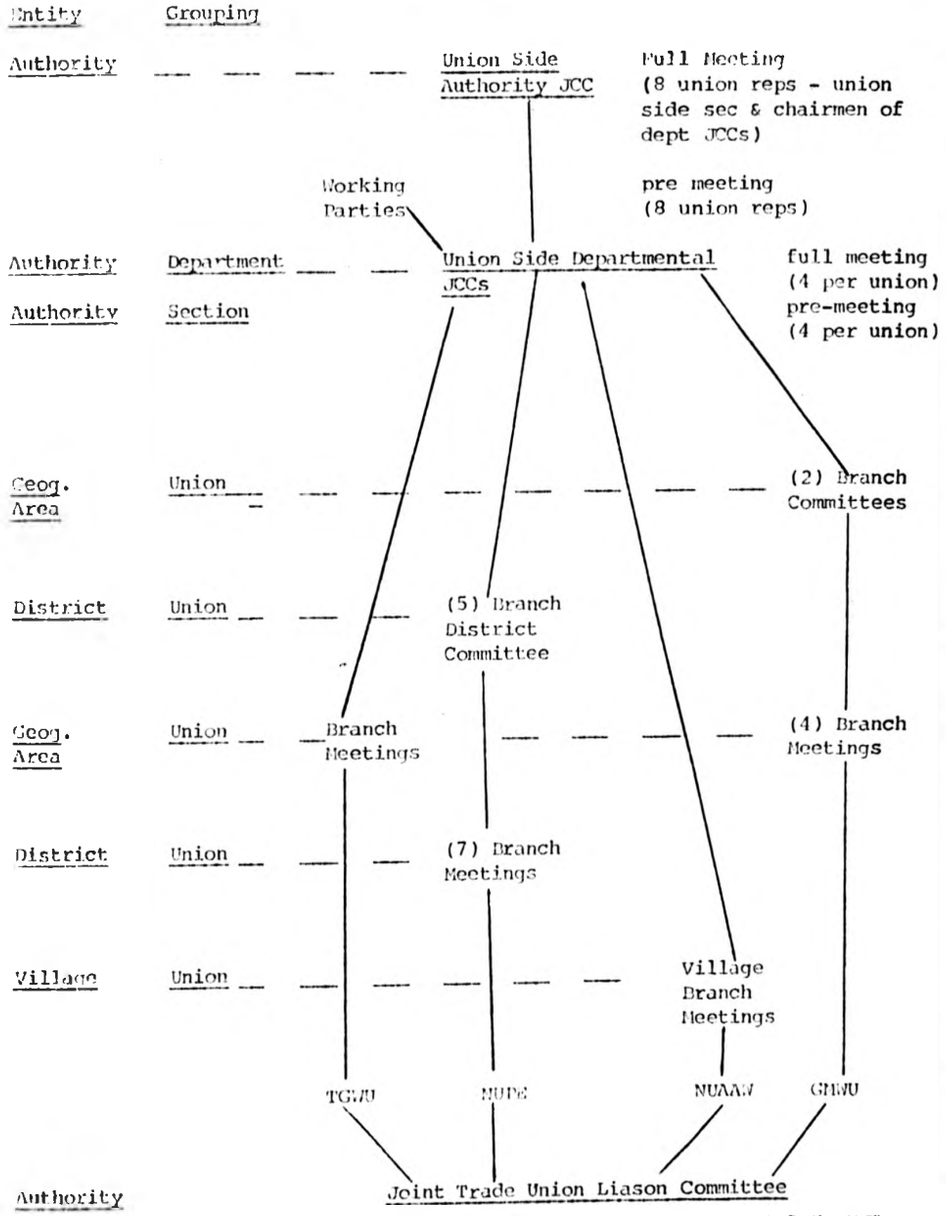
branch officers and senior levels of management. Allied to the limited time available to branch officers, it was not possible for them to develop the necessary informal relationships with council officers to settle a problem rapidly, by-passing procedure and a complex management structure. It was interesting to note that direct contact between stewards and full time union officers, not uncommon in Dorset and indicative of the significant role played by FTOs in DCC steward organization, may have been related to this limited branch officer effectiveness.

The role of branch officers was also closely related to the character of the branches for which they were responsible. The geographical coverage and occupational and industrial make-up of the branches within Dorset undermined the authority with which branch officers could act on county council matters. As already stressed, it was steward interaction within branches and their related structures which further served to inhibit the formation of a unified authority steward organization.

As figure 5.4 indicates, union branches in Dorset were based upon a range of geographical entities. They did, however,have two features in common. The first was that none of these entities corresponded to the total geographical area representing the authority. The second, less apparent from the figure but no less significant, was that none of them provided forums within which Dorset County Council stewards alone could meet. All branches to which DCC workers and stewards belonged were composed of workers and stewards from other local authorities or from other public and private sector industries. In this way, the Dorset branch structure institutionally reinforced the geographical

Figure 5.4 Formal Steward Interaction



(representative from NAS/UWT, NAHT, NALGO, NATFHE, NUT, AUEW, SIA as well as from NUPE, GMWU, TGWU and NUAAW)

scattering of the DCC steward body and diluted, in many instances overwhelmed, geographical branch groups of DCC stewards with stewards from other authorities and industries. The limiting effect such a branch structure had upon the possibility of developing authority-wide organization became particularly apparent when more detailed consideration was given to steward interaction within full branch meetings and branch committee meetings.

In the case of the GMWU and NUPE branches[3], care must be taken in making generalizations. A considerable number of branches were distinguished in Dorset, varying in their geographical coverage and their industrial and occupational composition. It would not, however, be too rash to suggest that the GMWU branches appeared to provide less scope for DCC interaction than NUPE branches. This was not particularly apparent at branch meetings which, regardless of union, had very low member and steward attendance. For example, the average attendance at branch meetings in the Bournemouth GMWU Branch was 13 and that at the NUPE North Dorset Branch just 8[4]. At both meetings only two DCC stewards were in regular attendance, at the Bournemouth meeting two caretaker stewards and at the North Dorset meeting a school meals and highway steward. The distinction became more apparent, however, when consideration was given to branch committee meetings.

Branch committees were not well developed in the GMWU branches and where they existed they provided little scope for steward interaction and few opportunities to discuss issues of specific concern to DCC workers. The Weymouth Branch did not have a branch committee. The Bridport GMWU Branch Committee was designed to include representatives from all industries covered and included only one DCC steward. The GMWU Bournemouth

Branch Committee provided greater potential for steward interaction. This body, open to all branch stewards, had been created in 1980 by the District Officer specifically to discuss the members response to a proposed TUC Day of Action. But, this committee was not firmly established and, of the local government stewards attending, few were from Dorset County Council. The majority of the stewards came from Bournemouth and Christchurch District Councils, with only two DCC stewards, both caretakers, in regular attendance.

NUPE's Branch District Committees were more significant as forums for steward interaction. These committees were open to all branch stewards and, given the character of the NUPE branches in Dorset, stewards who represented members in local government alone. Furthermore, a number of these BDCs met on a regular basis. Although the geographical size of the area covered by the West Dorset branch and the distances stewards needed to travel restricted West Dorset BDC meetings, Poole and Wimbourne BDCs were held on a monthly basis.

It needs to be stressed, however, that the character of interaction within BDCs also served to undermine the likelihood of authority-wide steward organization developing in Dorset County Council. In being based upon the district, interaction with BDCs inevitable fragmented the DCC steward body along geographical lines. Furthermore, although the BDC's were composed of local government stewards alone, these stewards came from at least two distinct authorities, the district council covered and Dorset County Council. The balance between stewards from these two authorities varied, for example, in the Poole and Wimbourne BDC, county council stewards were in the majority, but nonetheless this intermingling invariably took place. These characteristics of steward interaction

within BDCs combined to reduce steward identity with the county and inhibited the development of a county perspective.

The failure of such a county perspective to develop was best illustrated by the processes taking place within the BDC meetings. In contrast to the Hackney Branch Committee, the Dorset BDCs were confined primarily to communicating information. For example, at a Poole BDC meeting attended, stewards were restricted solely to giving reports on any developments in terms and conditions for those workers whom they represented and to receiving reports on provincial council meetings. Issues of specific concern to county council employees rarely emerged, being of little relevance or interest to district council stewards. Even if such issues did arise, the BDC, as a district based body, could act with little authority in dealing with them.

The branch structure developed as a consequence of the reorganization of NUPE was ill-suited to encourage the emergence of authority-wide steward organization in Dorset County Council[5]. Based upon district employing authorities, such a structure totally failed to take account of the county employer. Certainly, the difficulties of establishing a county branch need to be recognized. The artificial imposition of such a branch upon a large rural authority such as Dorset would leave unresolved the practical problems of its effective operation. If stewards had difficulties meeting in the West Dorset BDC, the likelihood of stewards from throughout the authority being able to meet on a regular basis was even more remote. Even so, the effect of the NUPE branch structure, and indeed the GMWU branch structure, within Dorset was to fragment the DCC steward body on a geographical basis and dilute these geographical groups of DCC stewards through their involvement with stewards

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from other authorities and industries. Such a branch structure could inhibit the emergence of an authority perspective amongst stewards and restrict the mobilization of the branch in pursuit of DCC objectives.

The geographical fragmentation of the steward body imposed by the Dorset branch structure might have been expected to elevate the county's Joint Consultative Committees to a position of some importance in the development of steward unity. Although fragmenting the steward body along functional lines, the JCCs, with the exception of the committee introduced for Weymouth College, represented the only authority-based structures of any significance within which DCC stewards might conceivably meet. In fact, the importance of the JCCs in promoting a degree of unity, albeit amongst functional groups of stewards, was undermined by the manner in which JCC seats were allocated in relation to the pattern of union membership. In only one JCC, that for roadmen, was the potential for authority level interaction fully realized.

The distribution of seats on the union sides of the JCCs provoked a prolonged and often bitter debate, both within the union side itself, and between unions and management. The debate, slowing down but not preventing the introduction of the JCCs, had still not completely subsided two years after the inaugural JCC meetings. Discussion revolved primarily around whether the seats should be distributed in proportion to union membership or simply on the basis of an equal distribution between all four recognized unions. NUPE, dominating membership in all manual worker employing departments, naturally favoured the former option. As will become apparent in the next section, the final decision to distribute seats equally between the four unions was to have a very significant impact upon the operation of the JCCs. Of greater interest in this section was

the drastic effect the decision had upon opportunities for steward interaction at the authority level.

An initial plan for the distribution of seats attempted to build-in representation not only from different unions but from different geographical areas of the county. The authority was to be divided into four sections, each union providing one representative from each area. The implementation of such a plan, based upon the realization that working conditions might vary significantly in different parts of a large authority, would have been particularly beneficial to the development of genuine authority-wide interaction between stewards. In practice, the plan proved too ambitious. Most of the unions simply had to get who they could to sit upon the JCCs, regardless of the area of the authority they came from.

The opportunism of most unions in recruiting stewards to represent them upon JCCs was indicative of the problems raised by the system adopted to distribute seats. Given NUPE's membership dominance, the other unions had difficulties finding stewards from throughout the authority, let alone from particular parts of it. Thus, a situation existed whereby the NUAAW, with its membership solely confined to county roadmen, had four seats on the other JCCs. Similarly, the TGWU with its membership concentrated also amongst roadmen and, to a lesser extent, amongst school and college caretakers and cleaners, had seats upon the other two JCCs. NUPE, with so many stewards in all departments covered, was left with its four seats on all the committees.

In the absence of open agenda meetings similar to those identified in Hackney, this distribution of seats clearly reduced the number of

stewards who could conceivably meet within JCCs. On three of the JCCs the TGWU, NUAAW and GMWU were unable to fill all of their seats. Very often representation upon these bodies was left to the full time union officer alone. NUPE, in contrast, was condemned to exclude many of its stewards. This situation was fully reflected in average steward attendances at JCC meetings. At the only genuinely multi-union JCC, that for roadmen, eleven stewards were usually in attendance; at the County Establishments JCC the average was seven and at the School Meals and Social Services JCC five and three respectively(6). In total, only twenty-six of the county's one hundred stewards were regular attenders within the only authority level bodies of any significance.

Presented with a steward body geographically fragmented and diluted, involved in very limited authority level interaction within functionally distinct JCCs, the development of authority level structures open to all stewards was essential to the creation of a unified steward organization The picture presented in Figure 5.4, which suggests that such integrative bodies may indeed have existed, is somewhat deceptive. Thus, the Joint Consultative Committee (Manual Workers) and the Joint Trade Union Liaison Committee might at first sight be taken as bodies equivalent to the Hackney JNC and JSSC. Closer attention to the make up and operation of these bodies, however, revealed their failure and inability to stimulate the emergence of unified authority-wide steward organization.

The JCC (Manual Workers) was certainly designed in a manner which would have encouraged the development of some unity within the manual workforce. The union side of this body was composed of the employee chairmen and secretaries from each of the four functional JCCs. Although the union side was therefore limited to eight representatives, interaction

between stewards from different sectional and departmental groupings was at least ensured. In practice, this body rarely met. Constitutionally the JCC (Manual Workers) was only supposed to meet twice a year. Yet it had failed to comply with even this limited requirement, meeting only once since its establishment in 1978.

In fact, the operation of the JCC (Manual Workers) provides a perfect illustration of the failure of a unified steward organization to emerge and act in a unified manner within Dorset. This JCC had been established to allow discussion between worker representatives and senior council officers on issues of relevance to the total manual workforce. Its failure to meet more frequently related in large part to the simple inability of worker representatives to recognize or generate issues of authority-wide concern. The issues discussed at the only meeting held, which included the establishment of a health and safety committee, the design of wage slips, methods of wage payment and the 1980/81 council budget, had all been injected by the management side.

The JTULC encouraged even less interaction between stewards than the JCC (Manual Workers). As originally conceived, this body had significant potential as a forum for steward interaction for it was a joint shop stewards committee in the making. Established on the initiative of the NUPE Area Officer in 1979 in an attempt to encourage the development of a common policy on cuts across the whole of the DCC workforce[7], each union was entitled to send a full time officer and two stewards. However, its success in developing such a common policy was more evident than its success in stimulating steward interaction. It was certainly agreed, at least formally, that 'all organizations should adopt a common attitude to the cuts proposed and not suggest to the authority that they be made in other areas which might affect members of other trade unions'. Yet at the

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first meeting of JTULC not one manual steward had been present; at the second meeting, only one steward was in attendance and at the third meeting only two. With all manual worker full time union officers present at these meetings, this body might more accurately be regarded as a joint full time union officer committee.

In conclusion, therefore, it was not possible to identify within Dorset County Council a unified authority steward organization. The steward body had been geographically fragmented by a branch structure which institutionally reinforced the scattering of stewards over a wide area. Even within branches, DCC stewards lost their authority identity being forced to mix with stewards from other authorities and industries. Within the NUPE branch structure so carefully moulded to reflect district employers, it would not be unfair to describe county workers as the 'forgotten group'. Even within functionally based JCCs, which at least held out the prospect of regular authority level interaction, the manner in which JCC seats were distributed severely restricted the number of stewards who actually met. The bodies which were open to stewards regardless of grouping throughout the authority appeared ineffective in unifying this steward body and integrating stewards into an authority organization.

It was the very fragmentation of the steward body which in part hindered the effective operation of open bodies. Stewards with partial and diluted perspectives had difficulty generating authority issues of common concern within the JCC (Manual Workers). The development of such partial perspectives was to have a significant effect generally upon the stewards' role, particularly within formal structures. It is to a consideration of the steward's role within Dorset that attention

now turns.

The Role of the Steward

The extent to which stewards representing different occupational groups of workers could pursue the different aspects of their role varied significantly in Dorset. The dangers of generalizing on the role of the local authority manual steward became fully apparent within this authority. The scope for bargaining had certainly broadened but the negotiating aspect of the steward's role had developed only for stewards representing particular groups of workers. For those stewards not involved in bargaining, communication of information from both the unions and management and resolution of individual member problems were of prime importance. Within formal bodies as well, the particular aspect of the steward's role being pursued was dependent upon the JCC being considered. All these variations suggested differences in what stewards had to do to service members and maintain their constitutencies.

This section focuses upon the variations in the steward's role within Dorset and seeks an understanding of why such variations existed. In doing so, particular stress is laid upon the pattern of decision-making within the management structure and management perceptions of the steward's role. Attention is also given to the abilities of the stewards themselves to pursue the different aspects of their roles. This was especially significant because the parochialism of branch officer and steward concerns, and the difficulties faced by them in trying to adopt an authority-wide perspective, considerably restricted their activities and limited the extent to which they could claim to represent significant sections of the workforce.

Before looking at the impact of bonus schemes on the steward's role, it is important to place into perspective the number of workers covered. Large numbers of workers were not on bonus schemes, including social service workers, school meal assistants and school caretakers and cleaners, although for this latter group of workers a scheme was being discussed during the research. With the exception of schemes for school groundsmen and for certain colleges of higher education[8], the majority of bonus schemes were concentrated in the Transport and Engineering Department. The most significant of these schemes, covering the largest single group of workers, was that for roadmen. Workers within the County Repair Depot and waste disposal plants were covered by their own separate schemes. Accepting that the picture was liable to alter radically with the implementation of the scheme for caretakers and cleaners, it remains important to stress that during fieldwork only about four hundred of the authority's seven thousand strong manual workforce were covered by bonus schemes. Of the one hundred DCC manual stewards, only twenty-four represented workers covered by them.

It was interesting to note that steward representation had developed earlier and more thoroughly amongst those workers with schemes in the Transport and Engineering Department than amongst workers without schemes in the Social Services and Education Departments. However, the influence of schemes upon the steward's role appeared to be less closely related to the simple existence of a scheme than to the character of the scheme and the manner in which it had been implemented. For example, the roadmen's scheme differed in a number of respects from other schemes and had a strikingly different effect upon the steward's role. Closer attention to this scheme and the one proposed for caretakers and cleaners illustrates the possible variation in the impact of schemes.

The roadmen's scheme, introduced in 1971, was the first to be implemented for DCC manual workers. It was a scheme which had a profound impact both upon the development of steward representation and upon the role of the roadmen stewards. Employee procedural involvement in the scheme was maintained by management, firstly, through the emergence of 'worker representative' and, secondly through the convening of regular 'worker representatives' meetings at which bonus issues could be discussed with the relevant council officers. It was, however, the nature of the scheme itself which ensured the continued generation of issues to be dealt with by 'worker representatives'. In contrast to subsequent schemes, which were based upon a measured day work formula linking fixed bonus payments to given staffing/performance levels, the roadmen's scheme was dependent upon a detailed time and motion study which allocated particular time values to specific tasks. As an indication of the type of task measured, it was calculated to take one and a half seconds to remove a brick of a given size and design from a lorry to ground level.

Time values provided undoubted scope for bargaining. Given the minute nature of work tasks measured, changes in working conditions and equipment necessitated the continual renegotiation of values. Similarly, the emergence of new tasks demanded discussion on values to be attached. Where bargaining took place, therefore, it tended to revolve around these sorts of issues and took place primarily within 'worker representatives' meetings. Yet a bonus scheme constructed in such a manner also gave rise to many problems and encouraged the development of the steward's problem-resolving function. Fluctuations in earnings, and confusion related to the substantial paperwork involved in calculating performance levels, were major sources of problems. Indeed, all four highway stewards interviewed

indicated that bonus gave rise to most of the problems they dealt with.

Conscious management efforts to move away from the roadmen's type of scheme reduced the volume of substantive bonus issues generated and tended to confine the steward to a 'once and for all' involvement in discussions related to the implementation of schemes. The limited involvement of stewards in subsequent schemes was illustrated during negotiations involving the caretakers and cleaners. Steward representation had already developed to some degree when the decision was taken to introduce a bonus scheme for caretakers and cleaners. As a result only a very small proportion of the caretaker and cleaners stewards could participate in discussions. The detailed implementation of the scheme was handled by a working party of the County Establishment JCC composed of only three stewards. Furthermore, although these stewards were undoubtedly involved in detailed negotiations, the NUPE Area Officer played a particularly prominent role. In contrast to Hackney, where branch officers rather than FTOs played the leading role in detailed bonus negotiations, the importance of the FTO was clearly apparent. The NUPE Area Officer tended to be present at all meetings of the caretaker and cleaners bonus working party. Furthermore, it was a presence which was positively encouraged by management. As a senior officer within the Personnel Department stated, 'We have been at pains, when schemes are being negotiated, to negotiate with full time officers'.

The opportunities for stewards to pursue the bargaining and problem-resolution aspects of their roles outside of bonus schemes was limited. This was significantly related to the pattern of decision-making authority within the management structure and, more particularly, steward access to decision-making levels. Line management below section

head level acted primarily in a supervisory capacity with some authority to discuss certain organizational features of work plus very specific types of technical and health and safety issues. However, the mobility of lower line management across the geographical areas for which they were usually responsible limited the steward's ability to maintain contact with them. The situation was further complicated by the fact that, strictly speaking, the first line of management for cleaners and school meals assistants were caretakers and cooks-in-charge who very often assumed the post of steward. As the GMWU District Officer observed, nine of the GMWU's ten DCC caretaker/cleaner stewards were head caretakers and all but one of the school meals stewards a cook-in-charge(9).

Responsibility for terms and conditions of employment within Dorset remained the de jure responsibility of senior levels of departmental line management. In reality there was considerable reliance upon the authority's Personnel Department. For example, the Education Supports Services Officer, who was responsible for all manual workers in the Education Department, noted that he was in daily contact with officers within the Personnel Department. Personnel Officers, in turn, pointed to the frequency of contact with departmental line management.

The original plan for the DCC management structure drawn up in 1974 had envisaged the development of specialized personnel officers within each service department. These posts had not been established, however, with a consequent lack of personnel expertise. This lack of expertise was graphically illustrated during attempts made by the Education Department to close the county's primary school meals service. The Chief Education Officer was continually issuing circulars informing workers of the closures only to have them withdrawn by the Personnel

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Department because they failed to comply with the employer's statutory obligations. Despite the formal responsibility of individual service departments for their workers terms and conditions of employment, therefore, the personnel function was de facto exercised in a rather centralized manner.

The centralization of the personnel function severely restricted steward and branch officer roles. Access to the Personnel Department was extremely limited. Formal disputes procedure confined steward activities solely to their own departments. Officers within the Personnel Department did not allow or seek to foster informal contacts with stewards or branch officers. The departmental policy was to deal, outside of JCCs, solely with full time union officers. Stewards, therefore, had few opportunities to deal effectively with bargainable issues or individual member's problems.

Officers within the Personnel Department saw stewards primarily as communicators. Three separate officers within that department stressed this particular aspect of the steward's role: 'They (stewards) are very much disseminators of information'; 'stewards are purveyors or carriers of information'; 'the role of the steward as far as we are concerned is someone through whom you get your information to the membership'. These views tended to assume the status of self-fulfilling prophesies because stewards were only used by management as communicators.

In support of their narrow conception of the steward's role within DCC, council officers continually stressed the parochialism of the steward's outlook and the lack of authority carried by either stewards or branch officers representing only very small sections of the workforce. This parochialism was in evidence during negotiations for the caretakers'

and cleaners' bonus schemes where certain stewards had difficulty broadening their outlooks to take account of circumstances beyond their own particular schools. Similar difficulties in developing a broader perspective were also apparent amongst a number of the JCC stewards.

Differences in the vigour with which aspects of the steward's role were pursued might lead to the suggestion that the effort needed to service members would vary depending on the types of workers represented. Amongst highway stewards, who had the greatest scope to pursue the different aspects of their role, similar devices were used to maintain contact with members as those adopted by stewards with dispersed and mobile memberships in Hackney. For example, although highway stewards tended to be scattered over wide areas interacting with one another only rarely, certain of their number were mobile throughout the division. Fellow mobile workers or even mobile lower line management were also used to facilitate member-steward contact. 'Predictable accessibility' was achieved by electing as steward someone who was likely to be static. Thus, one highway steward identified was a stores worker who was present in the depot at all times.

Establishment stewards in homes or schools had the fewest problems in maintaining contact with members. As noted, even those stewards representing a number of establishments over a given geographical area had tailored their constituencies on the basis of personal convenience. However, an example was found of a steward who had completely failed to maintain her constituency; she was the one and only Dorset home help steward. As in Hackney, many of the problems faced by this steward sprang from the fact that she had been appointed by the branch rather than being genuinely elected by the members. This was indicative of the inability of the home helps to come together for an election. In this instance it was

not enough simply to provide a steward. The nature of work, with home helps scattered and isolated, allied to the fact that home helps had no point of personal contact to receive pay or instructions, had raised insurmountable barriers to the maintenance of the constituency. As the home help steward noted, 'I never meet the people I represent...because we're out on our own.... No home help has ever come to me; I doubt if they know I'm their steward'(10).

Turning to a consideration of the steward's role within JCCs, it was particularly interesting to note the variation in steward activities within the different bodies. The four JCCs only began operating at the end of 1978 and the beginning of 1979, although the seeds were sown for their creation as far back as 1974 with local government reorganization. Reorganization prompted a series of joint union-management meetings which focused upon a range of problems and issues related to the need to harmonize terms and conditions of employment within the new authority. It was from these meetings that the suggestion for more permanent joint bodies arose. In contrast to Hackney, where JCCs were created solely on the initiative of the Personnel Department and in the face of some union opposition, in Dorset both unions and management favoured the idea(11). Even so, there was a considerable delay between reorganization and the inaugural JCC meetings.

This delay was a testament to the conflict that arose within both the management and union sides, as well as between the two sides, over the nature of the bodies to be created. Management were carefully monitoring the operation of a 'prototype' JCC at Weymouth College before establishing more broadly based structures. The unions, as already stressed, were debating the method of JCC seat distribution. There also appears to have

been some disagreement between unions and management about the processes to take place within JCCs. In a letter to the Chief Personnel Officer, the NUPE Area Officer stated, 'I would hope that the committees would be recognized as consultative/negotiating bodies rather than primarily consultative' (July 1976). In fact, as the name suggests, the JCCs were established primarily as consultative bodies.

The frequency with which different kinds of issues emerged within the four JCCs did not differ radically as Table 5.5 below indicates. Health and Safety and pay issues arose with some frequency in all of the bodies and those stewards participating clearly appear to have been discussing issues covering a broad range of different terms and conditions of employment. The Table does suggest, however, some variation in the volume of issues passing through the different JCCs. For example, it is possible to distinguish between the Roadmen and County Establishment JCCs, on the one hand, and the School Meals and Social Service JCCs, on the other. The School Meals JCC, which had met on a greater number of occasions that either the Roadmen or Establishments JCCs, had considered far fewer separate issues. The very failure of the Social Services JCC to meet more than three times since its inauguration was a direct consequence of the absence of related issues to discuss.

Table 5.4 Frequency of Issues Arising

Issues	JCC			
	County Estab. (6 meetings)	School Meals (8 meetings)	Roadmen (7 meetings)	Social Services (3 meetings)
Health & Safety	7	4	6	6
Wages/Pay	4	5	10	5
Terms of Employment	7	1	3	1
Working Arrangements	4	3	1	2
Holidays	1	1	1	1
Bonus	2	1	4	-
Grading	-	1	1	-
Facilities	4	1	1	-
Equipment	2	1	3	-
Training	2	1	1	2
Protective Clothing	1	1	4	1
Hours	-	-	-	2
Manning	2	6	-	2
Miscellaneous	5	4	5	5
	41	30	40	27

The variation in the volume of issues emerging within the different JCCs was partly related to the number of stewards participating in these bodies. In the absence of agenda meetings open to all eligible stewards, those stewards participating became crucial as providers of issues to be discussed. It was perhaps no coincidence that a correlation was found between the number of stewards usually attending JCCs and the volume of issues flowing through them. The quality of JCC representatives also had an influence upon the volume of issues. The full time male representative of the Roadmen and County Establishment JCCs appeared

far more confident and experienced than the part-time female representatives of the School Meals and Social Services JCCs. There was a far greater willingness on the part of representatives in the former two bodies to put forward issues and to contribute to discussions with management.

This variation in confidence and experience was reflected in the differing roles played by full time union officers within the JCCs. It certainly needs to be stressed that within all four JCCs, FTOs were figures of some importance and steward dependence upon them was in evidence. As a roadmen JCC representative noted, 'Area Officers... play a very important role because the JCCs haven't been going very long. They can talk to management better than us. They know the 'ins' and 'outs' of legal procedure. Later on maybe we'll be able to do without them'. Furthermore, it was rare for JCC meetings to take place without an FTO being present[12]. Nevertheless, FTOs appeared to play especially important roles within the Social Service and School Meals JCCs, dominating discussions and putting forward most of the issues.

As Table 5.6 indicates, there were differences in the balance between employer and employee-side items being injected into the different JCCs. Although employee-side items dominated both the Roadmen and Establishments JCCs, in the School Meals JCC employer issues were almost equal to employee issues. In the Social Services JCC employer issues were in the ascendence. This variation in the balance between employee and employer issues, in turn, came to influence the range of processes taking place within the different JCCs and had a direct effect upon the various aspects of the steward's role that could be pursued. Thus, as Table 5.7 notes, within the Roadmen and Establishments JCCs stewards were at least pursuing with some vigour the bargaining and problem-

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resolving aspects of their role, whereas in the School Meals and the Social Services JCCs, they were acting far more as recipients of information.

Table 5.5 Origin of JCC Issues

Initiator	JCC			
	County Estab.	School Meals	Roadmen	Social Services
Employer's Side	3	14	5	14
Employee Side	31	15	33	11
Origin Indeterminant	3	1	2	2

Table 5.6 Character of Issues Arising

Issue Type	JCC			
	County Estab.	School Meals	Roadmen	Social Services
Employer point of information	8	14	6	14
Employer request for information	-	-	-	-
Employer grievance	-	-	-	-
Employer request for change term/condition	2	-	-	-
Employee point of information	-	-	-	-
Employee request for information	16	7	20	7
Employee grievance	4	3	2	1
Employee request for change term/condition	11	6	12	5
Non-Classifiable	-	-	-	-

In seeking to explain the differences in employer and employee inputs into the JCCs and the variation in the processes taking place, previous references to the attendance, confidence and experience of stewards are clearly of some relevance. However, the nature and organization of work also had a crucial effect upon JCC processes. For example, the significant number of requests for changes in terms and conditions of employment within the Establishment JCC in part stemmed from the undoubted scope for bargaining on certain caretaker conditions of employment. Negotiations revolved around such issues as fees and conditions of private lettings and allowances for redecoration of caretaker homes. Similarly, the possibility of discussing bonus issues within the Roadmen JCC reflected the fact that road work lent itself to a scheme. In this respect the Social Service Department's affairs offer a strong contrast.

The organization of work for school meals workers also appeared to have played some part in structuring the processes taking place within the School Meals JCC. During the research, management were implementing the closure of the primary school meals service. The School Meals JCC had been adopted by council officers as a forum within which they could present their cuts to stewards and go through the formalities of consultation with them. This preoccupation with closures accounted for the significant number of JCC meetings, many of them emergency meetings, and the fact that so many issues discussed were management inspired[13]. Operating in such a manner, the School Meals JCC was somewhat akin to the consultative bodies identified in certain of Terry's (1982) authorities. Although not created to facilitate the pursuit of management objectives, it had effectively come to operate in this way.

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As Table 5.8 indicates, where stewards pursued the bargaining aspects of their role they met with some success. Two-thirds of the employee requests in the County Establishment JCC and half of those in the Roadmen JCC were either accepted or a compromise reached. Such success was partly related to the seniority of council officers attending. All JCC meetings were chaired by the Chief Personnel Officer or his deputy. Another personnel officer responsible for the workers covered by the body was usually present; often an officer from the Treasury was in attendance to discuss the financial implications of issues, and amongst line management, divisional and sectional heads were invariably found. It was also a consequence of the authority delegated to these officers by the councillors.

Table 5.7 The Handling of Employee Requests for Changes in Terms and Conditions

Fate of Issues	JCC			
	County Estab.	School Meals	Roadmen	Social Services
Changes Secured	3	2	4	1
Rejected	-	1	2	-
Compromise	5	3	2	1
Non Conclusive	3	-	4	3

The council backcloth against which the officers in Dorset acted was certainly very different to that of Hackney. Councillor attitudes towards the authority's manual unions ranged between total apathy to outright hostility and contempt. On the whole, councillor involvement and interest in industrial relations was limited. Any regular contact between councillors and personnel officers below Assistant Chief Personnel Officer level was minimal. Only the Assistant Chief Personnel Officer and the Chief Personnel Officer attended Co-Ordination Sub-Committee meetings

and had any regular informal contact with councillors. As one personnel officer observed, 'Industrial relations is a management problem. In London Boroughs officers are not delegated as much authority as in shire counties. Because of the distances involved in the shire counties councillors can't meet so regularly. There is less delegation where councillors can meet say every four weeks'. The freedom of council officers to act was completed in Dorset by the absence of a forum within which worker representatives could formally meet with councillors.

The independence and authority of council officers allowed some decisive bargaining to take place within JCCs. The reverse side of the coin, as already noted, was the rather unfavourable atmosphere within which stewards functioned. Many of the facilities taken for granted in Hackney were simply not available in Dorset; these included generous time-off from work on union business, access to senior levels of management, and a willingness on the part of management to deal with stewards rather than go over their heads to full time union officers. This unfavourable atmosphere even pervaded the JCCs; for example, the absence of any worker representative from the Bridport area was a consequence of management's refusal to meet a union request for transport facilities for them.

In summary, therefore, it was apparent that the variation in the ability of stewards to pursue the different aspects of their roles was related in large part to the types of workers represented. Particular work tasks were more likely to generate bargainable issues than others. However, it was equally apparent that management-designed procedures had a significant impact on whether stewards were involved in handling the bargainable issues that did emerge. It was noted how the design and procedures associated with different bonus schemes determined steward

participation in their implementation and operation. Management attitudes and behaviour were also influential in restricting the activities of most stewards to the communication of information. In short, against a background of councillor attitudes and beliefs that were particularly unsympathetic to the unions, management was responsible for creating an atmosphere far from conducive to wide-ranging steward action.

The very nature of steward organization also served to undermine the ability of stewards to pursue the different aspects of their role. The fragmentation of organization undermined their claims to represent broad sections of the workforce and inhibited the development of an authority-wide perspective. Consequently, both stewards and council officers tended to develop a reliance upon full time union officers. It was this fragmentation which was also to restrict severely the possibilities of united industrial action by the Dorset manual workforce.

Industrial Action

The spirit of the county's most celebrated trade unionists, the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs', hardly seemed to have inspired the county council manual workforce to any significant feats of radicalism or militancy. The character of steward organization distinguished above did not facilitate the taking of industrial action either by the total manual workforce or by specific sections of it on an authority-wide basis. The generation and articulation of authority-wide objectives, which could have formed the basis of unified industrial action, and the practical possibilities of conducting such action, were severely inhibited by the institutional fragmentation of the steward body and by the complete absence of integrative and co-ordinating authority-wide structures. This was particularly well illustrated in the parochialism of the aims which

had stimulated the limited industrial action within the county and in the failure of the workforce to act in a unified manner either during national disputes or in the face of the more immediate threat of the closure of the primary school meals service[14].

Four of the five local disputes identified during research involved not only very specific occupational groups of workers, but groupings confined to particular establishments. Two of these disputes centred upon workers within the County Repair Depot, the other two upon manual staff within Poole College. In both establishments short stoppages of work had been prompted by wages issues. In the County Repair Depot (CRD) the non-payment of the first of the 1974 threshold awards had produced a half day stoppage; in Poole College a two day strike had been occasioned by discontent generally over delays in wage payment. Workers in each of these establishments were also involved in action in pursuit of bonus schemes. Successful strike action was taken in the CRD, for half a day, and at Poole College, for a day and a half, to speed up the introduction of schemes. These two latter disputes were particularly interesting, providing a useful corrective to the view that bonus schemes were in all cases imposed by management upon an unwilling workforce.

The significant feature of the fifth instance of local industrial action within Dorset County Council was not that action took place, but that the action was not more widely supported and sustained. The action in question was a lobby of County Hall before a meeting of the Education Committee, attended by three hundred people in protest over the closure of the primary school meals service across the whole of the county, which would produce 680 guaranteed redundancies. Its limited nature represented a particularly clear illustration of the practical difficulties of

conducting industrial action across the county. The closure of the primary school meals service represented an issue affecting not only manual workers but the community as a whole. There was no absence of feeling against the closures and yet it proved impracticable to co-ordinate and sustain widespread action.

The involvement of DCC workers in national disputes was confined primarily to the 1978-79 'Winter of Discontent'. Although the 1970 national dispute had prompted district council workers in Dorset, such as refuse workers, roadsweepers and cemetry workers to take action, there was little evidence of county council participation[15]. The activity during 1978-79 took place mainly during the Day of Action and was characterized by its patchiness and the complete absence of any authority-wide co-ordination. A substantial proportion of the DCC workforce came out on the Day but the enthusiasm workers displayed varied. Highway workers in at least one of the county's highway depots had to be 'persuaded' to come out by local refuse workers; six school meals workers left their union in protest against the branch decision to strike; and many of the Bournemouth caretakers refused to take part. Subsequent to the Day of Action, highway workers in particular depots operated an overtime ban, which held up winter gritting, whilst certain college caretakers and cleaners stopped work at 'inconvenient times'.

As initially suggested, the absence of frequent or sustained periods of industrial action amongst DCC workers was related both to the difficulties faced in generating authority-wide objectives amongst specific groups or across the total workforce and the practical problems of co-ordinating and conducting such action. However, the lack of 'industrial muscle' within the DCC manual workforce was also a factor

of some importance in inhibiting action. This was not particularly significant during national disputes. Such disputes were usually conducted on the basis of selective action by the more powerful groups, who, in Dorset, were employed by district councils. However, the absence of powerful workers where local DCC issues were concerned, robbed the manual workforce of effective vanguard groups and limited the likelihood of successful pursuit of demands.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Two features of steward organization within Dorset stand out prominently from this discussion. The first is the very limited importance of the authority as an entity upon which steward organization could be based, and the second is the complete lack of a unified steward organization embracing the different occupational, functional and organizational groups comprising the manual workforce. Steward organization within DCC was of a 'geographically fragmented' kind.

Initial indications of the limited value of the authority as an entity upon which steward organization could be based emerged in the discussion of steward types. In contrast to Hackney, where the authority had proved to be both a viable and an important basis of representation, geographical entities below the level of the authority proved to be far more significant in Dorset. In a situation where small concentrations of employees within establishments were unable or unwilling to elect their own stewards, variously defined geographical entities, rather than the authority, were adopted as the basis for constituencies.

It was when the discussion turned to consider types of steward organization, however, that the importance of the geographical entities below the level of the authority became fully apparent. Geographical areas, defined with varying degrees of precision, had come to form the basis of union branch structures. Combined with the tendency for branches to cover workers not only from the DCC, but from other authorities and industries, this branch structure had a devastating effect upon the possibility of a unified authority steward organization emerging. The geographical scattering of workers and stewards was

institutionally reinforced and identity with the county diluted through co-existence with stewards from outside of the authority. The only form of regular authority level interaction within JCCs involved few stewards and there was a complete absence of effective authority-level structures open to all stewards.

This fragmentation of the steward body, and the inability of stewards to develop authority perspectives, was to contribute significantly to the limited role played by many of the DCC stewards. Stewards had great difficulty in perceiving issues in authority-wide terms, whether the issues affected a specific group or the total manual workforce. This tended to undermine steward credibility with management who, under no councillor pressure to act in a contrary manner, could choose to exclude many stewards from industrial relations processes, relying instead upon full time union officers. Similarly the fragmentation of the steward body and the failure to perceive issues broadly presented major problems both in co-ordinating and organizing industrial action and even denied the workforce objectives upon which such action might be based.

Turning to a consideration of variables which influenced the character of steward organization, it is important to recognize that certain structural features of Dorset County Council severely limited the extent to which the authority could form the basis of organization. As a large, predominantly rural authority composed of small isolated communities, it was almost inconceivable that the total area of the authority could become a viable or meaningful entity upon which organization could develop. As a basis for steward interaction, major difficulties emerged when stewards from across the whole authority attempted to meet regularly at a given place and time. As stressed on

a number of occasions, the fact that stewards from just one district of the county had difficulty meeting on a regular basis places into perspective the possibility of establishing effective authority-wide bodies.

It might be argued that the influence of another of the authority's structural features, the functions performed, exaggerated the effect of authority size upon steward organization. The functions performed by the county did not create an especially diversified occupational workforce but did ensure a workforce composed predominantly of part-time female workers. This, in turn, begs the question as to whether committed and powerful groups of full-time workers might not have been more prepared to make greater efforts to overcome the barriers placed in the way of authority-level steward organization. This line of argument is, however, of limited value. The absence of powerful groups of workers in all probability did have some influence upon the pattern of industrial action, but it would be a mistake to establish too simplistic a relationship between part-time and full-time workers and commitment and enthusiasm to steward organization. There was little evidence in Dorset to suggest that the difficulties presented by geographical size had a more debilitating effect upon part-time worker involvement in steward organization than upon full-time workers.

Moving to a consideration of the influence of management upon steward organization, it was clear that certain factors were intimately related to the structural features of the authority. For example, management structure and the organization of work were influenced to some degree by the size of the authority. Size encouraged the use of the geographical division or area as a management unit which was to form the basis of much steward representation. The independence of council officers

was enhanced by the inability of councillors to meet more regularly and their need as a consequence to delegate authority. Nevertheless, management were not placed in a strait-jacket by the structural features of the county and retained considerable freedom of action. The manner in which they acted vis-a-vis steward organization, either directly or indirectly, was to have a very significant effect upon the development and operation of that organization.

Attention was drawn to the rather unfavourable atmosphere created by management for the development and operation of steward organization within Dorset. In unravelling the relationship between council officers and councillors, it became clear that whilst councillor attitudes and beliefs did not constitute a sympathetic backcloth against which manual unions acted, they were not particularly to the fore in influencing council officer behaviour. This observation suggested the importance of council officers in cultivating, either consciously or unconsciously, the conditions within which stewards operated.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that the behaviour of departmental line management directly inhibited the development of stewards organization, yet the failure of a specialized personnel function to emerge within service departments led to the centralization of this function within the Personnel Department. Policies adopted within this department rather more consciously limited steward involvement in processes, with a tendency to rely to a considerable extent upon full time union officers. It was this exclusion which significantly contributed to the restraint on steward activity.

Focusing more particularly upon the influence of management in developing the steward's bargaining function through the introduction of

bonus schemes, it was clear that changes in management policy could have a significant effect upon this aspect of the steward's role. The positive influence management could have was particularly well illustrated when consideration was given to the introduction of the highway bonus scheme. However, the scheme should be seen as an exception stemming from management inexperience in dealing with schemes in the early seventies. The type of scheme which had stimulated so much steward activity was quickly replaced by schemes requiring very limited steward involvement.

Amongst the union factors influencing steward organization in Dorset, multi-unionism was seen to have an effect primarily upon the scope for steward interaction at the authority level. The pattern of union membership, allied to the manner in which JCC seats were distributed, was seen to reduce the number of stewards who could conceivably meet within the only authority level structures of any significance, namely, the JCCs. The influence of multi-unionism in fragmenting the steward body, however, was less significant than the fragmentation imposed by the individual unions themselves through their branch structures.

The union branch structures identified in Dorset had a devastating effect upon the possibility of creating unified authority-wide steward organization. They inhibited the development of such organization in two respects; firstly, they institutionally reinforced the geographical scattering of stewards and workers, being based upon lower level geographical areas within the authority; secondly, they diluted the DCC steward body through ensuring the co-existence of DCC stewards with stewards from other authorities and industries. The need to create branches based upon areas within the county was clearly related to the geographical size of the authority. The possibility of a branch effectively operating at the level

of an authority such as Dorset was limited.

The fragmentation of the steward body in Dorset elevated the full time union officer to a position of crucial importance in the development and operation of steward organization. The FTO was the only figure who could legitimately claim to cover the whole authority and to be capable of taking an authority-wide perspective. Numerous examples were found of the importance of the full time union officer to steward organization. For instance, it was the NUPE Area Officer who stimulated the creation of a Joint Trade Union Liaison Committee and the GMWU District Officer who encouraged steward meetings within one of his branches. The dependence of stewards upon the FTO was particularly apparent in dealings with management. In part, this was encouraged by management but it also reinforced the lack of steward confidence and experience and their parochial outlooks. Given the structure of Dorset's steward organization the full time union officer was liable to remain an important figure.

NOTES

1. The NUAAW has since amalgamated with the TGWU and now represents the Agricultural and Allied Workers National Trade Group of that union.

2. The close relationship between stewards and branches was also identified by Fryer et al (1974) and Terry (1982).

3. The TGWU and NUAAW branches were of very limited significance as forums within which DCC stewards could interact.

4. The Bournemouth GMWU figure was averaged over three branch meetings, the NUPE N. Dorset branch over two meetings.

5. As the branch structure instituted by the reorganization of NUPE began to operate, there was certainly a growing recognition within the union that county council workers presented a major organizational problem. The Executive Council of NUPE in its Report on NUPE structure submitted to the Special Rules revision Conference on 27 May 1982 stated that, 'in 1975 the Union's structure was based on local authority districts as the geographical size of County Councils would normally make it unmanageable to organize a BDC covering the whole of a county council area'. One of the major proposals for change in this report was for the establishment of County Council Shop Steward Committees.

6. These attendance figures were based on the attendance records for all of the JCCs that had been held within the authority. In the case of the Roadmen's JCC this was seven meetings, the County Establishment JCC six, School Meals eight and Social Services three.

7. The NUPE Area Officer was stimulated to take this action by the very real fear that manual workers would take the brunt of any cuts. Such a view was substantiated to some extent with the closure of the primary school meals service.

8. Bonus schemes for college caretakers, cleaners and canteen workers were introduced on an individual college basis. Thus Weymouth College had been the first college to receive a scheme, the Poole College scheme being introduced at a later date. It was not unknown for manual workers within a college to turn down the possibility of having a scheme. For example, this happened at South Dorset Technical College.

9. This was confirmed in the interviews. Eleven of the twelve caretaker/cleaner stewards were head caretakers and three of the four school meals stewards cooks-in-charge.

10. In all of the case studies undertaken, the number of stewards unable to maintain or service their constituencies was higher than made apparent on the basis of steward interviews. Asked about their ability to maintain constituencies, stewards tended to view such a question as an attack upon their competence and immediately assumed a defensive posture. Time and resources permitting, it may have been more useful to question ordinary members themselves about the quality of the service provided by their stewards.

11. This difference in the enthusiasm of unions in Dorset and Hackney to the establishment of joint consultative/negotiating bodies may have reflected the differences in access to senior levels of management within the two authorities. Thus in Hackney stewards were seen to have greater and easier access to decision-making levels than in Dorset.

12. The NUAAW FTO attended all Roadmen JCCs, the NUPE FTO all but one. The GMWU and NUPE FTOs attended seven of the eight school meals JCC held.

13. The employer issues connected with the closure of the primary school meals service are presented as 'employer points of information' rather than 'employer requests for changes in terms and conditions of employment' primarily because they were presented to worker representatives in such a form. The closures were not a request; they were presented very much as a fait accompli.

14. As in Hackney, management did not keep figures related to industrial action taken. The examples of industrial action cited were distinguished on the basis of local newspaper reports and interviews.

15. The only mention made of DCC workers in local newspaper reports during the 1970 'Dirty Jobs Strike' notes the Weymouth Branch Secretary as stating, 'Employees...in Dorset County Council (within his branch) are willing to come out'. (Dorset Evening Echo 14.10.70). There is no further evidence to suggest that they did in fact take any concrete action.

CHAPTER 6

BIRMINGHAM CITY METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Birmingham City Council (BCC) covered 64,822 acres of the industrial heartland of the West Midlands and with 1,033,900 inhabitants had the largest population of any metropolitan district council in the country. The size of the workforce was a reflection both of the numbers needed to service such a concentration of people and of the wide range of functions which were performed by the authority. A total of 47,500 workers were employed by Birmingham, of whom 7,700 were teachers, 14,000 white collar employees and 25,400 manual employees.

In contrast to Hackney and Dorset where the hegemony of one party had been long established, political allegiances in Birmingham were not clear cut. This was reflected both in the fine balance of the council, 68 of the councillors representing the Labour Party, 52 the Conservative Party and 6 the Liberal Party, and in the fact that the previous administration had been under the control of the Conservatives[1]. The 126 councillors were organized into thirteen committees. Five of these committees were strategic policy-making committees; the General Purposes, Finance and Management, Economic Development, Performance Review, and Personnel Committees. Of these committees, the latter was of particular interest, as it acted authoritatively upon personnel issues affecting the whole of the workforce. The other eight committees reflected the services provided; the Education, Social Services, Planning and Highways, Catering, National Exhibition Centre, Markets, Environmental Health, and Leisure Services Committees.

Management and the Organization of Work

The employment of such a large manual workforce carrying out a wide range of distinct functions necessitated the development of a complex and sophisticated management structure. Eleven separate departments employed manual workers in Birmingham, and in five of them, over one thousand manual employees were to be found. Table 6.1 provides an indication of the departmental structure, the size and character of the worforces attached to them, and the occupational groups of particular interest within each department. The three major employers of manual labour were the Education, Social Services, and Recreation and Amenities Departments. Figures 6.1-3 indicate the management structure and the organization of work within each of these departments.

Table 6.1 Departmental Structure and Work Force Sizes

	Full Time		Part-Time	
Department	Male	Female	Male	Female
Amenities and Recreation (parks, baths, security patrol)	1,135	162	83	142
Catering	25	387	1	315
Education (caretakers, cleaners, school meals)	1,025	1,043	52	10,030
Engineers (highways, sewage)	731	45	-	271
Environmental Health (refuse, street cleaners	929	18	1	14
Estates (cleaners)	13	7	-	10
Housing (craftsmen, builders)	2,804	63	29	181
Markets (police, maintenance)	83	3	-	4
Museums and Art Galleries (attendants)	121	5	-	8
Libraries (attendants, security)	37	3	34	122
Social Services (home helps, residential homes, drivers, laundry)	273	929	23	3,877
Personnel	1	7	-	2
Totals	7,511	2,672	223	15,006

Source: Personnel Department 31.3.80

Figure 6.1 Management Branches of the Education Department

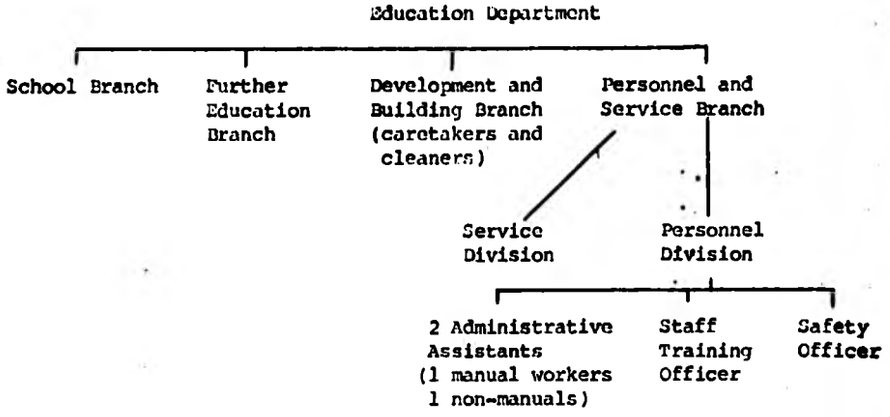


Figure 6.2 Social Service Department Management Structure

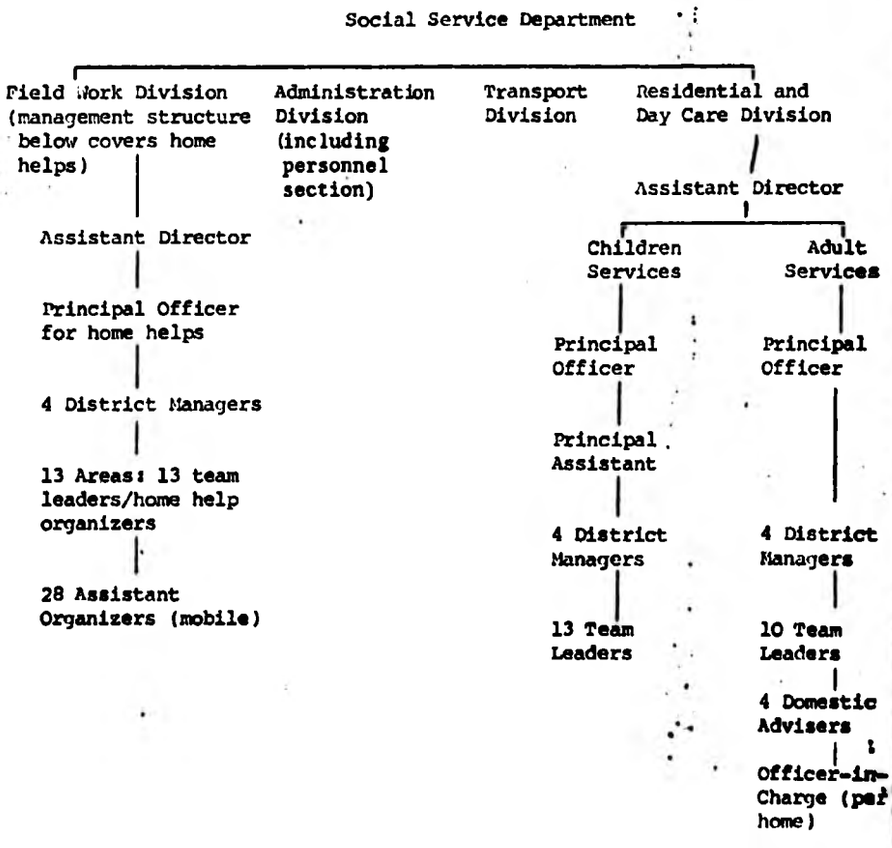


Figure 6.3 Recreation and Amenities Department Management Structure

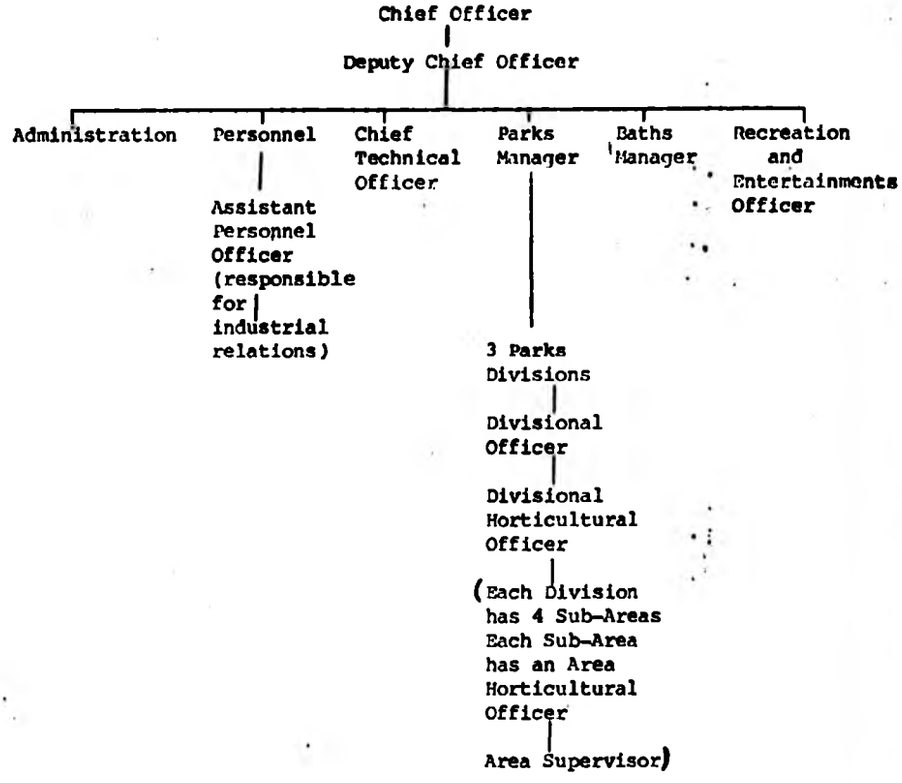
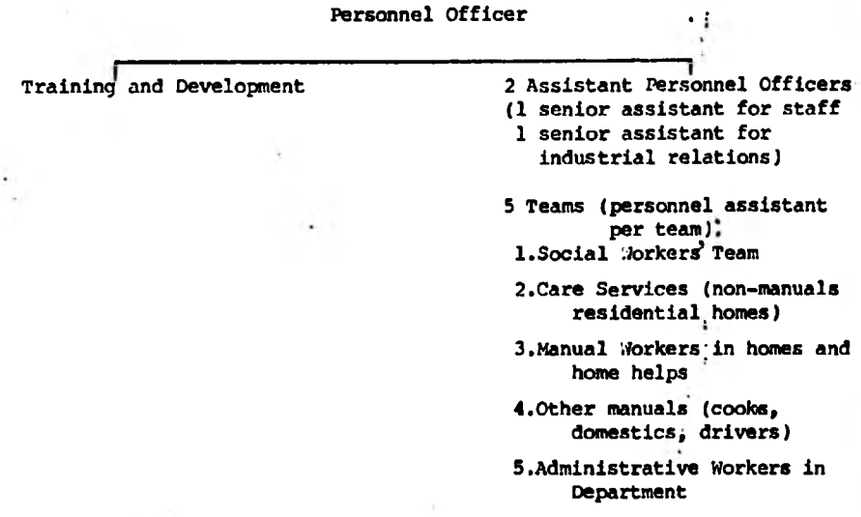


Table 6.1 gives a particularly clear indication of the character of the Birmingham manual workforce. Almost two-thirds of the total workforce was composed of part-time female employees with significant concentrations in both the Education and Social Services Departments. Yet, despite this overall numerical dominance, it is still apparent from the Table that workforces in the three other major manual employing departments - the Recreation and Amenities, Engineers, and Environmental Health Departments - were predominantly composed of full-time males. Similarity of employment status does not imply similarity of working conditions, as noted in Hackney, but departmental workforces remained

distinguishable in terms of the employment status of their employees.

One of the notable features of the management structure in Birmingham, indicated within the figures above, was the developed nature of the personnel function. Each department had its own personnel section or division, employing personnel officers who displayed a high degree of specialization. Some indication of this specialization is provided in Figure 6.4 below which presents the organization of the personnel function in the Social Service Department.

Figure 6.4 The Personnel Section of the Social Services Administration Division



Two officers within this department were responsible for a specific range of social service manual occupational groups. These specialized personnel officers were employed by the individual service departments; they were accountable to their chief officers and acted in an advisory capacity to them. They need to be distinguished from officers within

the separate Central Personnel Department which retained considerable decision-making authority on major personnel issues. In an organization the size of Birmingham City Council, a strong personnel department was essential for the maintenance of common industrial relations practices, procedures and terms and conditions of employment.[1] The relationship between departmental personnel officers and Central Personnel Department Officers is explored in some detail later. As will become apparent, the type and range of issues dealt with by these different officers and the distribution of authority between them had a major influence upon the role of stewards within Birmingham.

Trade Union Organization

Four unions had members in the BCC workforce, although NUPE, with two-thirds of the authority's 14,000 union members, was the numerically dominant union. NUPE had members in most of the manual employing departments, but the significant proportion of part-time female members reflected their strength in the Education and Social Service Departments. This contrasted sharply with the pattern of TGWU membership in the authority which was based primarily upon full-time male workers and concentrated in the Engineering and Environmental Health Departments. A union membership agreement had recently been signed with the Labour Council although union density was only around 53 percent. The negotiation of such an agreement with a relatively low density level suggests that local party political policy may have played some part in the decision[2].

Table 6.2 Manual Worker Union Membership

Union	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
NUPE	2,000	7,282	9,282
GMWU	1,512	813	2,325
TGWU	1,886	81	1,967
COHSE	176	134	310

A distinctive branch structure was identified in Birmingham with the TGWU Branch organized along different lines from the two other major unions. The TGWU Branch Secretary was a BCC employee and was effectively a full-time lay officer, spending much of his time dealing with Birmingham Council issues. The branch, however, was only loosely based on the area covered by the authority and embraced all public service workers in the union. NUPE and GMWU branches were remarkably similar in coverage, as Figure 6.5 below indicates. Each union had a series of occupational or 'service-based' branches, with a general branch to cater for other members. Branches from both these unions were 'authority-orientated', in that they corresponded to the area covered by the authority, their members were employed only by the authority, and branch officers were council employees. The feature which distinguished them from any of the branches so far considered in this study was their restriction to workers from particular occupational, sectional or deparmental groups.

Figure 6.5 Birmingham Branch Structure

NUPE

Education Branch(1) (caretakers/ cleaners in pre-1974 Birmingham area)	Education Branch(2) (caretakers/ cleaners in Sutton Coal-field area, now part of Birmingham)	School Meals Branch	Social Service Branch (all but home helps)	Home Help Branch	Playing Field Branch	General Branch (all those not covered by occupation branches
		Stewards' Meeting	Branch Committee (senior stewards)	Branch Committee (all stewards)		Stewards' Meeting
			Stewards' Meeting (all stewards)			

GMWU

Education Branch(1)	Education Branch(2)	Baths Branch	Parks and Cemetries Branch	Central Branch (all those not covered by occupational branches)
Two branches originally covered different parts of Birmingham; now both have membership in all parts			Stewards' Meeting	

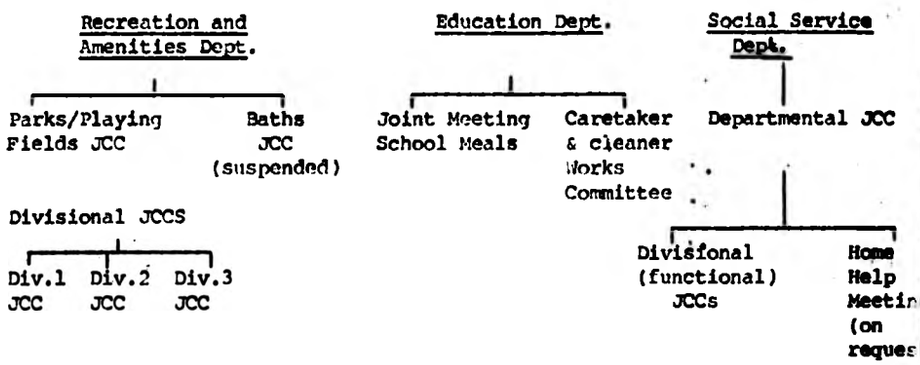
TGWU

TGWU General Branch (covers all public service workers in Birmingham area)

Brief mention should also be made of the rather unusual distribution of responsibilities amongst NUPE full-time officers in Birmingham. In the other authorities studied, union full-time officers were responsible for all workers employed by a particular council regardless of occupation or department. In Birmingham, three NUPE officials were identified, two with specific departmental responsiblities for the Education Department and Social Service Department respectively, and the third with general responsibility for NUPE members in other departments. NUPE membership in the Education and Social Services Departments was large enough to justify not only service based branches but specialist area officers as well.

Turning to joint union-management machinery, a range of consultative committees were identified which provided opportunities for worker representatives to meet council officers. A co-ordinated and systematic attempt had been made to establish joint structures with the result that similar machinery was found in most manual departments. In a number of departments JCCs covered all manual workers employed within them; thus the Catering, Environmental Health, and Engineering Departments all had single departmental JCCs. Some attempt, however, was made to develop more sophisticated consultative networks in certain other departments. As Figure 6.6 below indicates, two of the three manual employing departments had joint machinery situated below the level of the department. In the Social Service Department it was based upon functional management divisions and in the Recreation and Amenities Department upon organizational management division. Final mention should be made of the absence of regular worker-councillor contact. Formal councillor involvement in joint structures was restricted to the chairing of certain JCCs. The Social Services JCC, for example, had a councillor chairman.

Figure 6.6 Birmingham Joint Machinery



Workplace organization in Birmingham was therefore developing within a very large and occupationally diverse workforce. It was a workforce employed by a relatively evenly balanced, but Labour controlled council. It was also organized in a significant range of departments and divided among four unions. Two of these unions had distinctive branch structures, with branches corresponding to services or occupations. It was interesting to note that this branch structure, allied to the joint machinery, provided considerable institutional reinforcement to occupational, sectional and departmental groups in the workforce. As will become increasingly apparent, fragmentation along these lines was a key feature of Birmingham's workplace organization.

PATTERNS OF STEWARD ORGANIZATION

Types of Steward

Steward representation appeared to be well developed in Birmingham. This was reflected in two main ways. Firstly, lower level entities tended to be exploited far more vigorously as a basis of representation than higher level entities. Thus, establishments and depots were of far greater importance in shaping constituencies than geographical areas or the authority itself. Secondly, there was a two-tier system of representation with a lower tier of 'ordinary stewards' and an upper tier of 'senior stewards'. These two features had, however, to be treated with some care and in many respects were deceptive. Full-time union officers and branch officers in Birmingham fully recognized the importance of developing representation. Yet their enthusiasm was not always matched by a willingness on the part of workers to elect stewards. This led on occasion to attempts to introduce stewards from above, with stewards very much branch nominees. The number of stewards, therefore, had to be carefully related to their commitment and experience.

Table 6.3 below identifies a similar range of constituencies in Birmingham to those identified in Hackney and Dorset. The establishment, however, structured the overwhelming proportion of these constituencies in Birmingham. The establishment was the key basis of representation for workers within baths, museums, art galleries[3], specific canteens within the Catering Department, and the social service laundry. The significance of the establishment for social service homes and school meals workers was particularly notable. For these workers, representation was close to one steward per establishment. Of the authority's 500

schools 450 had school meals stewards. The authority's 47 old people's homes had 43 stewards, and a further 40 stewards represented children's homes and day nurseries.

Table 6.3 Birmingham Steward Types

Entity	Group	Member Characteristics
Establishment	(a) multi occupation (b) single occupation (c) sectional group	static workers
Depot	(a) occupational group (b) sectional group (c) union group	mobile workers
Management Geographical Area	(a) multi occupation (b) single occupation	mobile workers scattered/isolated workers
Miscellaneous Geographical Area	(a) occupation (b) section (c) department (d) isolated individual by occupation or section	static workers
Authority	(a) isolated individuals by section	isolated and scattered

The comprehensive development of representation on the basis of the establishment for both social service homes and school meals workers stemmed from the intervention of union officers in the process by which stewards emerged. They were crucial in stimulating representation where stewards failed to emerge from amongst the workers themselves. In the case of the school meals workers, the NUPE Area Officer had, by a purely administrative act, created most of the school meals stewards. He altered the status of 'letter box' union members - individuals in schools who merely received union circulars - to fully accredited stewards. Amongst social service homes workers, the process had been slightly

different but still involved outside intervention. NUPE Social Service branch officers had systematically visited homes and persuaded workers to elect stewards.

Representation had also developed in a systematic and comprehensive manner amongst depot workers in the Engineering and Environmental Health Departments. Here the development of representation was based upon refining constituencies along occupational, organizational, and functional lines. In engineering depots, for example, sewage and highway sectional groups of workers were invariably found. In environmental health depots occupationally distinct groups, such as refuse workers and street cleaners, were similarly in evidence. In all depots within these two departments stewards had emerged to represent just these particular groups of workers.

The importance of multi-unionism in further refining depot constituencies was limited. It was rare for workers from the same section or occupation within a depot to belong to more than one union, but it was not unknown. Thus, in one engineering depot, stewards had emerged to represent NUPE and TGWU members in the highways section, whilst in an environmental health depot three stewards had emerged to represent NUPE, TGWU and GMWU refuse collectors.

Management-defined geographical areas were important as a basis of representation for isolated and scattered workers, as they had been in Hackney and Dorset. Birmingham home helps and parks workers used this type of area to structure steward constituencies. Amongst home helps, stewards had emerged with constituencies based upon nine of the thirteen management home help areas. Amongst parks workers, it was the

management division which had assumed a considerable degree of importance, although the situation was complicated by the fact that it was one of two possible entities upon which representation could be based. The alternative entity was the individual park within the division. The importance of either form of organization was to some extent dependent upon the type of parks worker under consideration. Sizable concentrations of static parks workers within a particular park had elected their own stewards. Yet in each of the three parks divisions, stewards could be found covering workers across the total area of the division. These divisional stewards represented those static workers who were unwilling or unable, given the small concentration of workers in the park, to elect their own stewards. They were, however, more specifically responsible for mobile parks workers who worked throughout the division but returned daily to depots within certain parks.

In Dorset the importance of miscellaneous geographical areas as a basis for representation had stemmed in large part from the existence of many branches dependent upon these areas within the authority. In Birmingham branches tended to cover the whole area of the authority, but miscellaneous areas still retained some importance in shaping steward constituencies. Their significance was particularly apparent for school caretakers and cleaners. Only 48 caretaker and cleaner stewards covered the 500 schools in Birmingham. Of these only 6, all from one branch, represented workers from their own school alone. The rest represented workers in a number of schools across areas defined with varying and often minimum degrees of precision. In certain instances, for example, the area covered lacked any specificity at all, with the proximity or availability of stewards determining who represented the workers at a particular point in time or over a particular issue.

The extensive development of representation based upon lower level entities, particularly the establishment, undermined the need for stewards with authority-wide constituencies. In Hackney, it was the very absence of many establishment stewards which necessitated the appointment of stewards with such broad constituencies. A limited number of these 'authority-type' stewards were, however, identified in Birmingham. The NUPE stewards based within the Central Library formally represented all manual workers in the forty-four branch libraries across the authority. Each of these branch libraries would employ one or two porters and cleaners, making it impracticable for them to elect their own stewards. Parks patrol stewards also tended to have authority-based constituencies reflecting the nature of their work. As the GMWU Parks Branch Secretary noted, 'They (parks patrol workers) are a floating membership...We were asked by management to specify areas of representation but we refused because it would tie a steward down too much'. As in Hackney, the existence of authority-wide branches enabled the appointment of stewards with responsibilities across the total area. The continued existence of 'authority-stewards' in Birmingham indicated that the authority was viewed as a viable entity upon which organization could be based.

Finally, some mention needs to be made of the basis upon which the upper tier of senior stewards had developed. Senior stewards were branch appointees and should be viewed as intermediary figures between 'ordinary' stewards and branch officers. Where branches mirrored individual service departments, branch officers retained overall responsibility for the departments' workers and ordinary stewards. As a consequence, senior stewards tended to cover more specific groups within the department, often particular geographical areas within the

authority or particular management units. In the Social Service Department, for example, a sophisticated network of senior stewards had been developed by the NUPE Social Service Branch. Senior stewards represented divisional groups within management defined areas[4]. Similarly the NUPE School Meals Branch had appointed twenty-two senior stewards, each covering a different area of the authority. In general branches embracing a number of departments senior stewards were more likely to have broader responsibilities. The NUPE General Branch, for instance, had appointed two senior stewards for both the Environmental Health and Engineers Departments. One covered all departmental manual workers in the area covered by Birmingham council prior to local government reorganization in 1974; the other, workers from the department specifically in the Sutton Coalfield area which was integrated into Birmingham after 1974. The relationship between branch structure and senior steward responsibilities was again well illustrated in the case of parks workers. In the absence of a service specific branch, the TGWU senior parks steward had authority-wide responsibilities, while the existence of a GMWU Parks Branch had left the Branch Secretary with authority responsibilities and made the appointment of senior stewards unnecessary.

The development of steward representation had, therefore, been pursued with great vigour in Birmingham. This was apparent in the refinement of constituencies on the basis of occupational, functional, and organization groups, but particularly in the enhanced importance of lower as opposed to higher level constituencies. Higher level entities, such as the authority, remained viable as the bases for steward constituencies, but representation had developed beyond the point where they needed to be relied upon. The character of the branch

structure in Birmingham helped to explain this comprehensive pattern of representation. Service or occupational branches were clearly able to devote more of their resources to the development of representation amongst specific groups of workers than general branches. In certain instances this enthusiasm to develop representation had manifested itself in the active involvement of branch officers in stimulating the election of stewards. The encouragement given to representation had helped produce a very large steward body. It is to a consideration of the possibility of creating a unified and integrated authority-level organization amongst such a body of stewards that attention now turns.

Types of Steward Organization

A unified and integrated authority-level steward organization had not developed in Birmingham. What had emerged, however, were a number of distinct steward organizations co-existing with one another. These separate steward organizations operated at the level of the authority, covering workers from across the whole authority and employed by the council alone. Yet they were organizations based firmly upon specific occupational or functional groups. The Birmingham workforce was therefore divided into a series of service-based steward organizations. Analysis of the patterns of informal steward interaction gave an indication of the fragmentation of the authority's steward organization, and this was confirmed when attention turned towards the more formal structures within which stewards met.

The lines of informal contact were similar in a number of respects to those identified in Hackney and the analogy of a wheel can be suggested again. Senior stewards or branch officers represented the central point or 'hub' of this pattern of contact. They were mobile throughout much

of the authority and had the time and specialized knowledge to act effectively in relation to many issues. Consequently, informal contact tended to be to and from them, with interaction between individual stewards being very limited. In contrast to Hackney, however, more than one wheel existed. A number of branch secretaries and senior stewards were identified covering the whole of the authority, but they were responsible for specific groups of workers within it. Contact was, therefore, between these particular branch officers and stewards from the specific group covered. For example, social service stewards alone were in contact with the NUPE Social Service Branch Secretary and only the GMWU stewards with the GMWU Parks Branch Secretary.

The degree of informal interaction between stewards of a more organized kind, based on ad hoc negotiations and consultations, varied between departments. In the Engineering, and Recreation and Amenities Department, for example, highways stewards and parks patrols stewards came together annually to discuss wage-related issues. But the potential for such interaction remained limited. Negotiation over bonus schemes, in particular, were not always open to stewards or branch officers, as will become apparent below. Furthermore, the sophisticated and comprehensive network of union and joint union-management machinery ensured that most issues were considered within these structures rather than being left to informal discussions.

The size and diversity of the Birmingham workforce was reflected in the range and sophistication of the formal bodies involving stewards. Yet from this complex range of structures it was still possible to distinguish distinctive patterns of steward interaction. Figure 6.7 (i-v)

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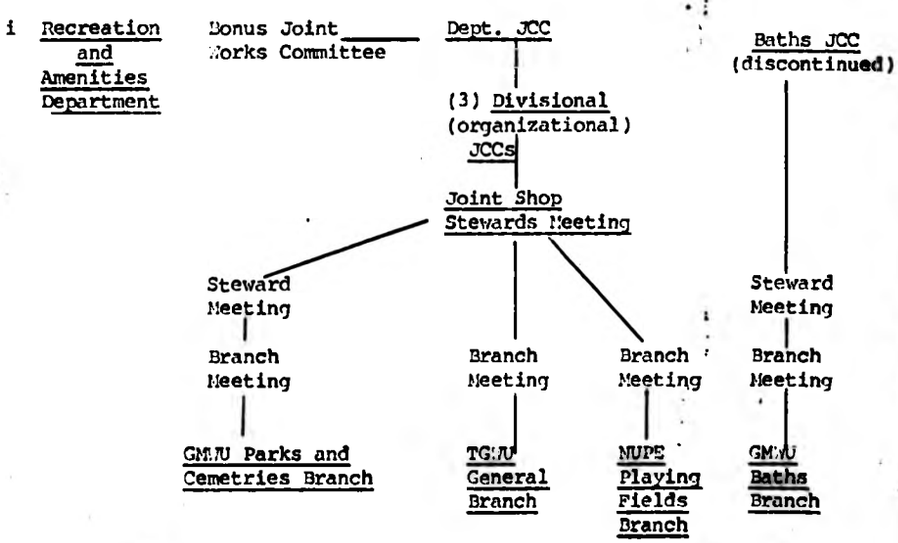
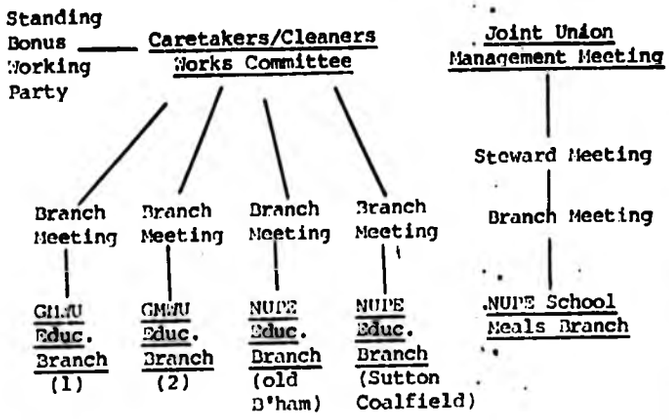
indicates the existence of a series of steward organizations within Birmingham, some based upon departments, others based upon more specific groups within departments. Crucial to the creation of these organizations was the manner in which union and joint union-management structures dovetailed into one another. It was this dovetailing which institutionally reinforced the occupational, sectional and departmental fragmentation of the steward body. The ineffectiveness of the three inter-departmental bodies which were open to representatives from the whole manual workforce, resulted in the failure of stewards to become integrated into a unified steward organization.

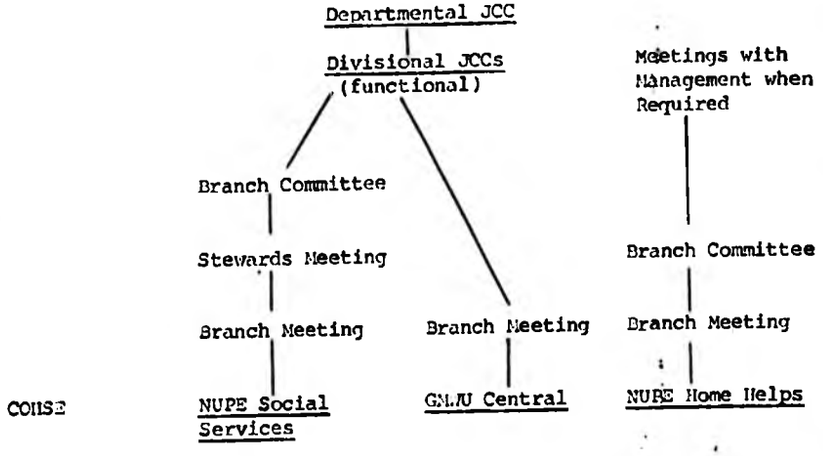
Figure 6.7 Formal Steward Interaction in Birmingham



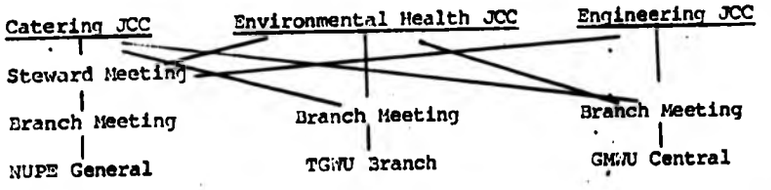
ii Education Department



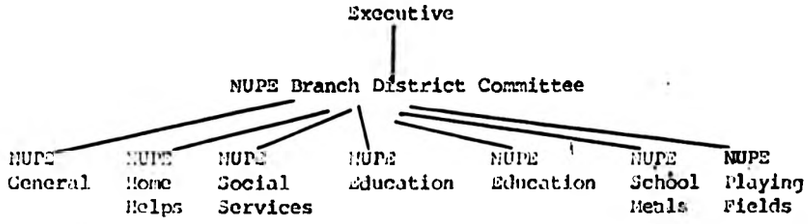
iii Social Service Department

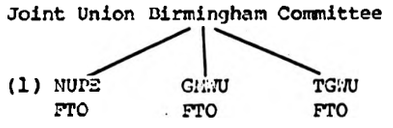


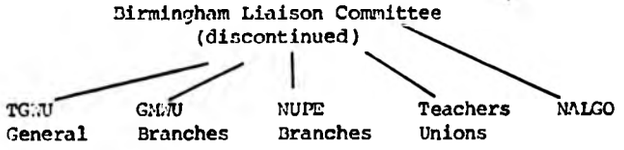
iv Other Departments



v Inter-Departmental Bodies







Focusing firstly upon the Social Services, and Recreation and Amenities Departments, it was possible to identify sets of related structures which might legitimately be viewed as distinct steward organizations. In both departments, two steward organizations appeared to be co-existing. One covered a specific group of workers, home helps in the Social Service Department and baths workers in the Recreation Department; the second embraced a broader range of groups; that is all other manual workers in the former department and parks and cemetry workers in the latter. Closer examination, however, revealed significant differences between the development and operation of these steward organizations. There was, in particular, an interesting contrast between

the narrowly based and broadly based organizations.

The NUPE Home Helps Branch, covering an occupational group of workers, and the GMWU Baths Branch, covering a sectional group, had encouraged the emergence of small, compact and homogeneous steward bodies. Furthermore, these stewards met with significant degrees of regularity. This interaction took place primarily in branch or steward committees and there had, in the past, been opportunities for certain of these stewards to meet as the union side of joint union-management structures. Yet despite the character of these steward bodies and the formal institutional machinery within which stewards could meet, they had manifestly failed to act and operate as effective steward organizations.

On the basis of the evidence from the Birmingham case study, it would appear that there may be a limit to the number and range of issues which can be raised from any one local authority occupational or sectional group and therefore a limit to the type of group which can sustain an operational steward organization. For example, it was the absence of significant baths-related issues which led to the discontinuation of the Baths JCC[5]. A similar absence of issues was apparent within the home helps' branch committee. This committee acted primarily as a forum within which information was disseminated to stewards. Yet the information related to very broad subjects rather than focusing upon issues of specific concern to home helps. For example, reports were given of NUPE Branch District Executive Committee meetings and Social Service JCC meetings.

Nevertheless, it was not the absence of issues which alone explained

the failure of the home help occupational group to sustain an operational steward organization. The relationship between members of this organization, particularly the relationship between stewards and their members, was also important. Branch Officers certainly felt that there should be no shortage of home help issues and complained to stewards that more home help problems should be forthcoming at branch committee meetings. But contact between scattered and isolated home help stewards and members, as in Hackney and Dorset, was limited and difficult. Problems and issues could not flow freely or easily from workers through stewards to the Branch Committee. At two meetings observed, only two issues of specific concern to home helps were raised, one concerning delays in pension payments, the other involving consideration of a School Meals Branch request for home help support in a demonstration.

The two other steward organizations which existed within the Social Services, and Recreation and Amenities Departments covered groups of workers both large and varied enough to justify or encourage the creation of operational steward organizations. The Social Service steward organization was based upon the NUPE Social Service Branch. The dominance of NUPE within this department had resulted in a union group reinforcing departmental organization and had prevented fragmentation of the steward body along union lines. The Social Service Branch, a large branch second in size only to the NUPE School Meals Branch, had a significant steward body comprising 171 stewards. This steward body was not occupationally homogeneous. It included meals-on-wheels stewards, laundry stewards and driver stewards; however, the overwhelming majority of stewards came from various kinds of homes within the authority.

An opportunity for all stewards to get together was provided by

the monthly branch steward meeting. This meeting allowed stewards to present problems to branch officers and it acted as a body which 'co-ordinated branch policy' and facilitated the dissemination of information by branch officers. It was this meeting which also provided a forum for the election of senior stewards who, in turn, made-up the branch committee. The network of senior stewards created by the branch was a clear example of the manner in which the steward organization had adapted itself to the department within which it had developed. Senior stewards, as already noted, covered management-defined divisions. They were elected by the ordinary stewards within that division rather than by the total senior body, thus ensuring that each division had a senior steward and a member on the Branch Committee. The Branch Committee acted, in the Branch Secretary's words, as a 'think tank', setting branch agendas, considering general departmental issues (for example, whether work study was applicable in residential homes), and passing recommendations down to steward and branch meetings.

Joint union-management consultative structures provided further opportunities for steward interaction. Although only a limited proportion of the steward body could interact within these consultative structures, their coverage and the distribution of union seats maximized what opportunities there were for interaction. As Figure 6.7 indicates, functional JCCs existed which mirrored management-defined divisions and the branch senior steward network. Perhaps more significantly, however, representation upon the full JCC was proportional to membership in the department. This was an interesting contrast to Hackney and Dorset where the failure to take membership levels into account in the distribution of seats had severely inhibited steward interaction. Thus NUPE membership dominance in Birmingham's Social Service Department was reflected in the fact that it had nine seats on the JCC while COHSE had two and the GMWU one.

The development of steward orgaaization amongst parks, cemetry and playing field workers (forthwith referred to as 'parks workers') provides an interesting contrast to the development of steward organization amongst social service workers. One union alone dominated the SocialService Department, but three different unions had major concentrations of membership amongst parks workers. Furthermore, two of these unions, the GM.U and NUPE, had institutionalized their presence through the creation of specialized service branches. Of the parks stewards emerging from the three unions, those within the GM.U Parks and Cemetries Branch were perhaps the most likely to develop some union allegiance or identity(6). The GM.U Branch had a membership of 630 and a steward body of twenty-two which had an opportunity to meet at regular branch steward meetings. The Branch also had an active branch secretary who spent much of his work time moving around the authority and maintaining contact with stewards. Yet it was clear that the total parks steward body within the Recreation and Amenities Department had not fragmented along union lines. Allegiance to union was modified significantly by the considerable scope for steward interaction within bodies open to all parks stewards regardless of union. Indeed the scope for this type of 'open interaction' amongst parks stewards was the most extensive of any single grouping of workers considered within any of the case study authorities.

Two types of 'open parks bodies' were identified within Birmingham, those for stewards alone, and those in which stewards met with members of management. The Joint Parks Shop Steward Committee was an example of the former. It was open to all stewards from the three unions and although attendance was felt by branch officers to be disappointing, given that meetings were held in work time, a significant number of

stewards still met within it. Thus, approximately twenty of the fifty parks stewards were usually present at meetings. The attendance of a significant number of stewards reflected the range of processes taking place within meetings. Information was disseminated, and reports of Central Parks JCCs were presented. General issues were discussed, for instance, forthcoming manual wage claims, and, of more local relevance, possible 'cuts' in the parks workforce in Birmingham. An opportunity was also provided for stewards to raise issues which could be placed onto the Central Parks JCC agenda. Two such items were raised at a meeting observed; clarification of the use being made of 'work experience youngsters' and complaints about temperatures in depot workshops.

The relatively low level of steward attendance at Parks Joint Shop Steward Committee meetings was partly accounted for by the strenuous efforts stewards had to make to attend such meetings even within work time. However, the opportunities that stewards had to raise issues of immediate concern directly with management was also important, lessening the need for attendance. The possibility of raising such issues was provided by the divisional JCCs. Three divisional JCCs existed in Birmingham, corresponding to the three management-defined area divisions. Consideration will be given below to the manner in which these bodies enhanced the steward's pursuit of the problem-resolving aspect of his role. Of greater interest at this point in the discussion was the potential they provided for extensive steward interaction. The divisional JCCs were open to all stewards within the relevant division and many attended. From an analysis of attendance records at two meetings of each divisional JCC, it was apparent that at least thirty-two of the fifty parks stewards had been present at one such meeting.

The operation of such open divisional JCCs raised the possibility of the parks steward body being fragmented along geographical lines. These bodies certainly encouraged the generation and articulation of issues of specific concern to workers and stewards in particular divisions. However, the unity of the parks steward body across the whole authority was preserved, not only by the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, but also by the Central Parks JCC into which the divisional JCCs were tightly locked. The divisional JCCs acted as filters for the Central JCC, settling issues of divisional concern whilst passing on issues with broader implications. The JCC provided a further opportunity for three stewards from each union to interact. Yet another body, the Joint Works Committee, allowed six worker representatives, usually branch officers, to meet management to discuss issues related to parks bonus schemes.

Home help and bath steward bodies were, therefore, small, occupationally homogeneous and compact. They met within sets of related structures which might legitimately be viewed as distinct steward organizations. But the groups of workers they covered were too narrow to generate the issues necessary to sustain operational steward organization. In contrast, the social service and parks steward bodies were large and varied enough to justify the emergence of service specific steward organization, but not too large and varied to prevent the effective operation of these organizations. The emergence of both these organizations was closely associated with the manner in which service-specific branch structures dovetailed into union-management structures. It was this dovetailing which structured and encouraged interaction between particular groups of stewards and allowed group aims and objectives to be generated and articulated.

The importance of this dovetailing for the creation of self-contained steward organizations can perhaps be best highlighted with a negative example. The steward bodies based upon the NUPE General Branch and the GMWU Central Branch were diversified. Stewards within these bodies not only represented very different types of workers from a range of departments, but they also had very different levels of experience and commitment. In the NUPE General Branch, for example, long established refuse and highway stewards co-existed with newly emerged catering and library stewards.

Yet it was not diversity alone which prevented unity. Diversity was a characteristic of steward bodies in Hackney and did not always inhibit unity. In Hackney the diversity within branches was a reflection of the diversity of the total manual workforce; the general branches embraced the whole manual workforce. Issues of authority-wide concern could be generated and acted upon. In Birmingham this was not possible. The general branches were not comprehensive enough as they covered only parts of the manual workforce. Consequently they were not in a position to consider broader types of issues or act authoritatively on them. In the absence of any unifying element, steward bodies within the Birmingham general branches tended to disintegrate. Stewards representing particular types of workers withdrew into a preoccupation with parochial issues. In the NUPE General Branch, for instance, this was reflected in low attendance at branch steward meetings, proceedings limited primarily in the dissemination of information and resolution of minor individual rather than collective issues. The full-time union officers also played an important role in structuring agendas and providing matters for discussion[7].

The existence of a massive and fragmented steward body within Birmingham severely inhibited the development of a unified steward organization. Effective 'open' structures within which stewards from across the authority and from throughout the workforce could meet did not emerge. However, it was not the absence of these bodies which prevented unified organization from developing. This absence was more a reflection of the difficulties faced in creating such unity. Of the three 'open' bodies identified in Figure 6.7, the NUPE Branch District Committee alone was specifically designed to allow steward interaction[8]. Indeed, this committee was formally composed of all NUPE Stewards covered by Birmingham City Council. Meetings of a committee composed of many hundreds of stewards could not be held on a regular basis. An executive had, as a result, been appointed to handle business with each of the authority's NUPE branches having at least one representative upon it. Full meetings of the BDC were confined to an annual 'set piece' when stewards were addressed by a 'prominent' NUPE figure, rather than dealing with concrete issues.

The other two 'open' bodies, the Birmingham Liaison Committee (BLC) and the Joint Union Birmingham Committee (JUBC), were of very limited significance. These bodies had not met recently or with any degree of regularity, and even when meeting had provided little scope for steward interaction. The BLC was composed of three full-time union officers drawn from each of the manual unions. It has been established to provide a forum within which manual worker unity on issues of general concern, for example, the union membership agreement, could be developed and to provide a point of contact for management when seeking a common union response. The lack of enthusiasm displayed by the GMWU official for inter-union co-operation partly inhibited the effectiveness of this

body. As secretary of the BLC, it was he who received approaches from management and convened meetings. Even so, there was a marked absence in the number or range of issues of concern to the total manual workforce rather than parts of it which management could raise with the Committee.

The JUBC, a body similar in many respects to the Dorset JTULC, had primarily been set up as a response to potential and actual cuts. It covered the entire white-collar and blue-collar Birmingham workforce and was open to full-time union officials and a limited number of their lay officers, usually branch secretaries. Again it was GMWU suspicion of NUPE motives which contributed to its breakdown(9).

It was, therefore, not possible to identify a single unified steward organization in Birmingham City. The steward body remained fragmented, not along geographical lines as in Dorset, but along occupational, sectional and departmental lines. This fragmentation did not necessarily produce self-contained steward organizations. In the case of home helps and baths workers, whilst the institutional machinery existed for such an organization, the group covered was too small to necessitate its continual operation. For steward bodies based upon general branches, the problem was almost the reverse; they were too diversified to allow effective cohesion but not comprehensive enough to permit authority action. At least two distinct steward organizations were, however, identified within Birmingham; one for parks workers and the other for social service workers. The dovetailing of union and joint union-management structures was seen to have encouraged the development of such organizations and more generally to have reinforced the fragmentation of the steward body. The character of the Birmingham

branch structure was important in producing this dovetailing effect. It was not the basis of joint union-management structures which distinguished Birmingham from Hackney and Dorset, but the service basis of branches. Finally, it was the failure of 'open' authority-wide structures to develop which provided a clear indication of the difficulties faced in creating a unified steward organization in Birmingham.

Role of the Steward

The ability of stewards in Birmingham to pursue the different aspects of their role varied with department and with types of workers represented. Yet it was generally apparent that stewards had far more scope to act as problem-resolvers and communicators than as bargainers. The character of the steward's role was significantly influenced by the structure and operation of the personnel function which, in Birmingham, was the most highly organized of any of the case study authorities. A strong central Personnel Department existed alongside highly specialized personnel sections and comprehensive networks of joint union-management consultative structures in individual service departments. Furthermore, the relationships between these different components were clearly defined and accepted by the council officers involved. The centralization of decision-making within the Personnel Department limited the potential for any steward to act as a bargainer. However, the development of the personnel function at the departmental level facilitated the resolution of problems and communication of information.

The variation in the steward's ability to bargain and resolve problems can be seen in the handling of bonus schemes. It must, of

course, be noted that only about a third of the manual workforce were covered by bonus schemes, and the most sizable groups of workers - home helps, social service homes and school meal workers - were excluded. Where workers were covered by bonus schemes, stewards were far more involved in resolving substantive problems which arose from them than they had been in the procedural process by which they were initially negotiated.

The work measurement upon which schemes were based was undertaken by the Work Study Section of the Personnel Department with very little steward participation. In negotiating details, involvement was in part related to what was practicable. The social service laundry scheme in Birmingham, for example, covered a small and specific group of workers, allowing the presence, if not the active involvement[10], of the two stewards within that establishment. Where schemes covered larger groups the presence of all stewards was simply not possible. Even so, there were examples of management making conscious policy decisions to exclude lay officers. The Personnel Department could become intimately involved in detailed bonus negotiations. The preference of this department for dealing with full-time union officers, rather than lay officers, on occasion led to the exclusion of the latter. The scheme for mobile parks workers, for instance, was negotiated by the GMWU full-time union officer and the TGWU de facto branch secretary on their own[11].

Once implemented, bonus schemes gave rise to few bargainable issues. They did, however, produce many problems and grievances. As in the previous case studies, the design of schemes influenced the volume of substantive issues subsequently arising in Birmingham. The contrast between the scheme for mobile parks workers and static parks workers

was particularly interesting in this respect. Bonus was earned with far greater ease in the latter scheme, with the result that far fewer bonus problems or grievances arose from static workers in comparison with mobile workers[12]. Accepting this distinction, it was generally apparent that many schemes were giving rise to problems of various kinds. These included problems related to the ease with which bonus was earned, fluctuations in earnings, and simple misunderstandings on the technicalities of schemes. As the TGWU Branch Secretary stated, 'Bonus is a major cause of problems. They (bonus schemes) are the biggest problem a steward has to deal with'. This was a view echoed by the NUPE General Branch Secretary who noted that problems were 'non-stop from every department where there were bonus schemes'. In contrast to the initial negotiation of schemes, stewards and branch officers were in a position to deal with many of the bonus problems. In the case of the parks workers, caretakers and cleaners, formal joint bodies existed specifically to deal with such problems. Outside of these bodies stewards could approach personnel staff in their own departments, although they, in turn, were often unable to resolve the problem without resort to the central Personnel Department.

Steward preoccupation with individual member grievances and problems, rather than with negotiable collective issues, was also apparent outside of bonus schemes. The limitations upon extensive steward involvement in regular bargaining processes were similar to those identified in previous case studies. Thus, lower line management in Birmingham had minimal decision-making authority whilst in certain instances the roles of steward and first line manager had merged into one individual. As indicated above, it was also clear that issues of collective concern were usually pushed into formal joint machinery,

placing them beyond the reach of many stewards. It was, however, the decision-making authority of the Personnel Department which significantly contributed to a reduction in steward and branch officer involvement in bargaining.

Issues of relevance to the whole manual workforce were dealt with solely by the Personnel Department. As already noted, this department dealt exclusively with full-time union officers. These officers were felt to have broader authority than stewards representing specific groups of workers or even branch officials who, in Birmingham, also represented only parts of the workforce. Thus, discussion on the union membership agreement and on the establishment of health and safety committees took place between full-time union officers and council officers from the Personnel Department to the complete exclusion of lay activists. On issues arising within individual service departments the situation was more complex as steward bargaining was not completely prevented. In the Engineering Department, for example, an annual winter gritting agreement had to be negotiated. Discussion of the terms and conditions surrounding the 1980-81 agreement involved no less than eleven stewards out of a departmental steward body of seventeen. Although two full-time union officers were also present, the stewards were in no way dependent upon them. Similarly, discussions on the additional payment for parks patrol workers above Grade G, necessitated negotiations with the Recreation and Amenities Department.

Perhaps of greater interest was the development of what appeared to be a two-stage form of bargaining which had emerged in response to the power of the Personnel Department. The first stage of this process witnessed the negotiation of agreements between stewards and council

officers. For example, agreement was reached in the Recreation and Amenities Department on the regrading of Turkish Baths Attendants and in the Social Services Department for greater time-off for the NUPE Branch Secretary for union work. The approval of these agreements by the Personnel Department was not, however, a formality and the second stage of the process, taking place within the management structure, involved personnel officers from individual service departments seeking to gain Personnel Department approval. The baths agreement, negotiated by the CMWU Branch Secretary and the full-time officer, excluding stewards, was in fact rejected by the Personnel Department. Discussion between council officers in the two departments were still taking place on the social service agreement at the time of the research. Although resort to the Personnel Department could be interpreted as part of a management strategy designed to frustrate workers' wishes, in the case of the social service negotiations, the personnel section argued vigorously for greater time-off provisions.

There was a fair degree of consensus amongst stewards, branch officers and council officers that the resolution of specific individual member problems was the major part of the steward's role. As the Education Department's Personnel Officer noted, 'stewards are dealing with individual grievances, queries on pay and disciplinaries'. The development of specialized personnel sections may well have encouraged the stewards to pursue this aspect of their role[12]. These sections, many of which had specific officers to deal with manual worker industrial relations, provided ready points of contact for stewards. Direct approaches to the personnel section by stewards were against grievance procedure and access tended to be at its freest for branch secretaries and senior stewards. This did not, however, prevent the direct approach.

The Personnel Officer in the Recreation and Amenities Department noted that parks stewards 'very rarely' went to the Parks Manager; 'one of our main criticisms is that people phone me...before raising the matter locally'.

The communications function of the steward should not be overlooked and, given the manner in which certain stewards emerged, it assumed considerable importance. As in Dorset, the steward was significant as a provider both of union and management information. The GMWU Parks Branch Secretary, for example, stressed that 'always the main thing is communication', whilst the Recreation and Amenities Personnel Officer saw one of the steward's functions as 'relaying the department's view to members'. For many school meals stewards, who had been granted their credentials by a purely administrative act after initially being 'letter boxes', communication remained the only aspect of the steward's role pursued with any effect. They continued to receive information and pass it on to members and did little else.

The final aspect of the steward's role, the maintenance or servicing of the constituency, was pursued with considerable vigour by many stewards in Birmingham. There were examples of stewards who had been unable to overcome the barriers faced in maintaining constituencies. The NUPE Library steward, for instance, responsible for library workers throughout the authority, admitted that he found it impossible to maintain contact with members. Other stewards had, however, employed a range of devices to facilitate maintenance of their constituencies.

Some of the devices used were of similar significance to Birmingham stewards as to stewards identified in previous case studies.

The mobility of stewards was again crucial. Parks divisional stewards, for example, were often employed as drivers and thus able to travel around the area covered. The appointment of more than one steward for the same constituency was also of value in Birmingham. This device was particularly important where members were scattered and isolated. Home helps, for instance, had elected more than one steward for a number of the management-defined areas.

Other familiar devices assumed particular significance in Birmingham. Management support was especially helpful to stewards, for example, in the Social Service Department, where a number of district managers had given permission for stewards to hold union meetings after staff meetings(13). In the Recreation and Amenities Department, management had placed the GMWU Parks Branch Secretary and the TGWU Senior Parks Steward in jobs which allowed them to carry out their union duties with greater ease.

Other methods employed by stewards in Birmingham were not found elsewhere. A monthly newsheet was produced specifically for home helps. This not only provided information, but also the telephone numbers of stewards, which opened an important means of contact for such a scattered and isolated workforce. Of broader significance was the network of senior stewards. As figures accessible to ordinary stewards and able to resolve certain problems with speed and effectiveness, they helped the steward to satisfy member needs and maintain the constituency as a viable unit.

The aspects of the steward's role pursued within joint union-management bodies were very similar to those pursued outside. A

concerted and co-ordinated attempt was made to establish a network of these bodies in all manual workers' departments following a decision of the Personnel Committee in December 1975. The Personnel Department, entrusted with the implementation of this policy, was fully aware that the degree of uniformity which could be imposed upon individual service departments was limited. The flexibility of the guidelines produced for the establishment of the joint bodies reflected differences in departmental styles of management, the existence of pre-1974 joint structures, and variation in the character of union organization within departments.

The flexibility embodied in the Personnel Department guidelines produced variation in the development of joint structures. Differences emerged, for example, in the period of time it took to establish these bodies; the Social Service JCC had its inaugural meeting in 1977, whereas the Catering Department JCC had only just started to operate in 1981. As noted above, methods of distributing union side seats varied significantly; in the Social Service JCC they were distributed in rough proportion to membership, while in the Parks Central Committee each union was allocated the same number regardless of members. More striking was the variation in adherence to the guidelines. It had originally been proposed that a councillor should chair each of the JCCs, but of those bodies analysed, only the Social Service JCC had complied.

Variation in the development and structure of joint bodies produced some differences in their operation, but generally the four JCCs analysed operated in a similar manner. As Table 6.4 below indicates, a broad range of issues arose in the Parks Central Committee, the Caretakers, the Social Service and the Baths JCCs. In only the

latter body did there appear to be a disproportionate consideration of a particular type of issue. Indeed, the contrast between the number of facilities issues arising in the Parks and Baths JCCs is especially noteworthy. The complete absence of this type of issues in the Parks Committee is an indication of the efficiency of divisional JCCs in filtering them out[14].

Table 6.4 Frequency of Issues Arising

Issue Type	Committee			
	Parks Central Committee (3 meetings)	Social Service JCC (22 meetings)	Caretaker/ Cleaner Works (6 meetings)	Baths JCC (7 meetings)
Health and Safety	-	1	1	1
Wages/Pay	7	12	9	5
Terms of Employment	3	6	2	-
Working Arrangements	3	6	2	-
Holidays	2	11	1	2
Bonus	-	1	1	3
Grading	-	6	-	-
Facilities	-	5	3	21
Equipment	4	1	-	6
Training	3	1	2	2
Protective Clothing	5	3	2	2
Hours	-	-	-	1
Manning	-	10	1	1
Miscellaneous	4	27	6	9
	31	90	39	59

Table 6.5 indicates that the overwhelming majority of issues considered in all four JCCs were employee initiated. Although management created these bodies, their input was very limited. In only the Caretaker and Cleaners Works Committee did management side issues form a significant proportion of the total number of issues considered. Table 6.6 also gives some indication of the large number of employee grievances and requests for information emerging, but does not provide the clearest of pictures of the number of such issues arising in joint bodies, particularly for social service and parks workers. For both sets of workers, grievances and requests for information surfacing at the departmental level were only those which had filtered through from lower level joint bodies. Such lower level bodies, based for social service workers on functional divisions and for parks workers on organizational divisions, were devoted to a consideration of these types of employee issue.

Table 6.5 Origin of Issues

Initiator	Committee			
	Parks Central Committee	Social Service JCC	Caretaker/ Cleaners Works	Baths JCC
Employer's Side Item	2	12	12	8
Employee Side Item	28	68	20	42
Origin Indeterminant	1	10	7	9

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Table 6.6 Nature of Issues Arising

Nature of Issue	Committee			
	Parks Central Committee	Social Services JCC	Caretaker/ Cleaners Works	Baths JCC
Employer Point of Information	1	1	11	7
Employer Request for Information	1	3	-	1
Employer Grievance	-	-	-	1
Employer Request for Change in Term/ Condition	--	2	-	-
Employee Point of Information	2	1	-	-
Employee Request for Information	11	20	3	11
Employee Grievance	10	31	10	25
*Employee Request for Change in Term/ Condition	5	16	7	5
Non-Classifiable	1	10	7	9

Stewards involved within joint bodies were therefore pursuing with considerable vigour the aspects of their role which involved the resolution of grievances and the communication of information. Their independence in performing these functions varied. In the Parks Central Committee, for example, branch officers led employee-side discussions, but most stewards present contributed and full-time union officers were not in attendance. Similarly, in the Caretaker and Cleaners Works Committee, full-time union officers were rarely present. In contrast, the NUPE Area Officer was present at all Social Service JCCs. Along with the NUPE Social Services Branch Secretary, he dominated discussions and other worker representatives who were present seemed heavily dependent

upon him. This pattern of relationships was also apparent at the School Meals joint union-management meetings.

Worker representatives could generally pursue these two aspects of their role with considerable effectiveness in all JCCs. Senior levels of management, responsible for and capable of dealing with the types of issues arising, were present at meetings. Departmental chief officers were rarely present but their deputies invariably were. They were usually accompanied by divisional and sectional heads and departmental personnel officers. The Personnel Department was not, however, usually represented. The non-attendance of officers from the Personnel Department was indicative both of the type of issue being discussed and the progress which could be made on these issues.

The concentration upon departmentally-specific and technical issues rarely necessitated the presence of the Personnel Department. There was also a fairly common acceptance amongst individual service department managers that these bodies were for consultation rather than negotiation. Management adherence to such a conception was reflected in the conflict over the name of the Parks Central Committee where management refused to give way to the workers' request for it to be referred to as a 'joint negotiating committee'. Where bargainable issues did arise discussion took place but authoritative decisions could not be taken. Service departments religously adhered to the need to refer bargainable issues to the Personnel Department. Numerous examples were found of such references. For instance, requests for additional payments for substitute and assistant caretakers during caretaker holidays, claims for a travelling allowance for mobile baths workers, and demands for a minimum payment for all social service night

duties, were all passed on in such a manner. Agreements reached on bargainable issues (Table 6.7) had Personnel Department approval in most instances.

Table 6.7 The Handling of Employee Requests for Changes in Terms and Conditions

Fate of Issue	Committee			
	Parks Central	Social Service	Caretaker/ Cleaner	Baths
Change Secured	2	4	2	2
Rejected	-	1	2	1
Compromise	-	4	1	1
Non-Conclusive	3	7	2	1

The opportunities for stewards to negotiate in joint bodies was clearly limited. It might further be argued that the lack of formal contact between worker representatives and councillors also reduced the scope for bargaining. In concluding this section it would be of some value to consider the character of councillor involvement in industrial relations and particularly the effect it had upon the steward's role in Birmingham.

As in other authorities studied, councillor attitudes and behaviour formed only a backcloth against which council officers acted in dealing with union organization in the authority. Their involvement in the detailed handling of industrial relations issues was limited. Councillor-officer contact on this type of issue was irregular and restricted in Birmingham to senior officers and chairmen of service committees. The Chief Personnel Officers of the Recreation and Amenities, and Education Departments, for example, noted only occasional contact between themselves

and the chairmen of their respective committees. This contact usually took the form of a communication of information such as notification of departmental staffing levels. More direct councillor involvement was confined primarily to consideration of broad policy issues such as establishment levels, the approval of the UNA, or to an 'emergency' situation where politically sensitive groups of workers threatened industrial action. Thus, it was interesting to note councillor participation in negotiations with refuse workers in 1969 and with highway workers over winter gritting in 1978.

The backcloth formed by councillor attitudes and behaviour in Birmingham was more complex in design to those identified in Hackney or Dorset. Networks of informal contact existed between a handful of key union figures and particular councillors. They had developed through Labour constituency parties, through full-time union officers addressing political groups meetings of particular committees and, in the exceptional case of the Social Services Department, through councillor involvement in JCCs. It needs to be stressed, however, that very few lay union figures had any regular contact with councillors.

Birmingham council officers were not as formally, or as regularly, accountable to councillors as they had been in Hackney where the JNC had brought worker representatives and councillors together in their presence. Nevertheless, they were undoubtedly aware of the networks of informal contact between union figures and councillors and, given that these contacts were usually with Labour councillors, were more liable to take account of them when there was a Labour administration. A number of council officers were inclined to underplay any major differences between Conservative and Labour councillor involvement in, or attitudes towards,

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industrial relations. There were, however, a number of examples where the backcloth formed by councillor attitudes had some effect upon officer actions.

Differences between the political parties were most apparent in the handling of policy issues. One example was the introduction of a union membership agreement, which had been agreed by a Labour administration but 'not been contemplated by the Concervatives'(15). Labour councillors were also prepared to assert their accessibility to lay union officers. A series of meetings were arranged by Labour councillors on assuming office making this clear to stewards. How accessible Labour councillors proved to be in practice was open to some debate. Certainly, there was a belief on the part of lay union officers that Labour should and would be more sympathetic to them and there were instances where attempts were made to go to councillors over the heads of council officers. A social service personnel officer noted, 'The Chairman of the Social Service JCC does tend to be biased towards the unions...It often means that the unions go to councillors rather than through normal procedures. The trade unions see it is in their interest to negotiate with councillors not just officers, so councillors are more involved'.

Summarizing this section, it has been possible to establish a fairly close relationship between the organization of the personnel function in Birmingham and the performance of the steward's role. Stewards had significant scope to resolve problems and to act as communicators of information. This was encouraged by the development of specialized personnel sections within individual service departments which provided ready points of contact for stewards and particularly for branch officers. The extensive network of joint union-management bodies,

allowing considerable steward involvement, enabled worker representatives to bring problems and requests for information to the attention of senior management. However, opportunities for stewards to act as bargainers were limited. Decision-making authority on bargainable issues was lodged firmly in the Personnel Department. Preferring to deal with full-time union officers, the Personnel Department excluded all lay union representatives and placed them in a position of dependence on certain issues. On matters affecting the total manual workforce, in particular, full-time union officers were seen as the only genuinely representative figures.

Note has been made of the fact that the fragmented steward organization identified in Birmingham had difficulty in generating issues of concern to the total manual workforce. Even on those issues which had a broad focus, lay representatives were excluded from dealing with them. This inability to produce or deal with broad issues was to affect the character of industrial action in Birmingham to which attention now turns.

Industrial Action

The character of industrial action in Birmingham initially appeared paradoxical. The first national dispute of 1970 took place at a time when steward organization in the authority had only just begun to develop. Yet the dispute received widespread support from a wide range of manual groups. A decade later, after sophisticated forms of steward organization had been established, the 1979 national dispute provoked little response amongst the council's manual workers. This apparent paradox was only resolvable by reference to the type of steward organization which had developed in the intervening period. As

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continually stressed, the emergence of fragmented steward organization encouraged the generation, articulation and entrenchment of aims and objectives of concern to only specific sections of the workforce. Whereas in 1970 the very absence of this sectional form of steward organization had facilitated the mobilization of the workforce in pursuit of national objectives, in 1979 its emergence hindered a repeat of this process.

The 1979 unofficial dispute was concentrated primarily in the London Boroughs but it did have a limited impact in Birmingham. Threats of industrial action were forthcoming, particularly from TGWU refuse workers. It was, however, the 1970 national dispute which elicited the most significant degree of support from workers. The national strategy of selective action was pursued with considerable effect in the authority. A type of 'rolling process' took place within Birmingham by which successive groups of workers, almost in order of the industrial muscle at their command, took action. Thus refuse workers and gravediggers took initial strike action followed, at intervals of varying length, by sewage workers, highway workers, parks workers, roadsweepers, lavatory cleaners, car park attendants and museum and art gallery attendants. Although only 2,000 of the authority's manual workforce were taking action at the high point of the dispute, this figure nevertheless represented workers from a broad range of groups.

In the subsequent period, as steward organization developed on the basis of different sections of the manual workforce, a number of local disputes took place involving particular groups of workers. For example, in 1978, school caretakers in attempting to achieve a new

lettings agreement, suspended letting services. Highway workers, in a long running dispute, refused to carry out winter gritting in 1978. The highway workers were seeking the replacement of a depot-based scheme, which necessitated their presence in the depot and which had been imposed by management, by a home-based scheme, which allowed them to remain at home whilst on stand-by. Social Service homes' workers threatened or took action on a number of occasions. The dismissal of the NUPE SocialServices Branch Secretary provoked action on a rota basis between homes, while non-payment for night breaks and possible closures of homes produced threats of action. Bonus schemes, as in Dorset, were also a major cause of action. Parks workers, refuse and highway workers, and social service drivers all took action ranging from overtime bans to strikes, in pursuit of bonus schemes or in protest against their operation.

The pursuit of sectional demands did not necessarily preclude taking action on broader-based aims. It was noted in Hackney, for example, that the parochialism of refuse workers did not prevent them from acting as the vanguard for the total manual workforce on a number of occasions. Yet in Hackney steward organization remained institutionally unified and compact. Workers and stewards from throughout the manual workforce not only mixed with one another but could develop and be bound by common policies and objectives. In Birmingham the institutional fragmentation of steward organization prevented similar interaction between workers and stewards and inhibited co-ordination and the development of common aims, policies and outlooks.

The inability of the Birmingham workforce to mobilize with any degree of unity was apparent on a number of occasions. The Birmingham

home helps, for example, failed to respond to a school meal workers' request for support in a demonstration against cuts in the service. This request was passed on in an impersonal manner by a home help branch officer to a meeting of home help stewards. There was no possibility of school meal workers or stewards presenting their own request or their own views and thus encouraging some sympathy. On a more dramatic scale was the very limited action taken during the 1979 national dispute. The Day of Action saw some support with all schools in the authority closed. But even on this day, refuse workers failed to come out for fear of disrupting the negotiations for their bonus scheme, while the highway workers' failure to grit roads was closely interrelated with their own dispute over standby schemes. After the Day of Action, worker involvement in the dispute was non-existent.

The absence of steward organization in 1970 facilitated the mobilization of the workforce in pursuit of national objectives. As steward organization developed on the basis of specific groups of workers within the workforce the possibility of developing or responding to broader objectives diminished. Pursuit of parochial interests, for example, issues related to bonus schemes as bargaining became decentralized, does not necessarily prevent the taking of unified action. In Birmingham, however, the character of steward organization encouraged the entrenchment of this parochialism and prevented stewards and workers from rising above it.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In summarizing the character of workplace organization in Birmingham, two essential features stand out. Firstly, the total authority remained a viable and meaningful basis for organization. The bodies within which stewards met covered the whole authority rather than particular geographical areas within it. They also embraced only workers employed by the authority, encouraging a concentration solely upon district council issues. Secondly, and perhaps more strikingly, it was not possible to identify a unified and integrated steward organization at this authority level. Rather than a single steward organization, a series of organizations were identified varying in coverage, sophistication and operational effectiveness.

The systematic and comprehensive development of steward representation amongst the Birmingham workforce produced a very large steward body. The proportion of this group involved in any form of interaction was limited. Where interaction did take place, however, it was within bodies open only to stewards representing specific groups of workers. It was the dovetailing of union and joint union-management bodies which produced such a pattern of interaction and encouraged the development of self-contained steward organizations. The absence of 'open' and integrative steward bodies was a reflection of the difficulties faced in creating a unified organization once fragmentation had become institutionally reinforced.

The character of steward organization in Birmingham tended to encourage the generation and articulation of issues of concern only to

particular groups of workers. It also fostered steward and worker identity with specific occupational, sectional and departmental groups rather than with the total manual workforce. The steward's role and the type of industrial action taken were affected by this narrowing of perspective. Stewards and branch officers had greater scope to pursue the problem-resolution and communication aspects of their roles rather than take part in any bargaining. Yet in performing either of these functions they were dealing with issues of concern to specific groups of workers. Where broader issues emerged these lay representatives were usually totally excluded from handling them. Similarly, the inability of steward organization to generate broader aims and objectives cutting across particular groups of workers and the preoccupation with very specific interests led to industrial action only in pursuit of the latter. As steward organization emerged, so parochialism developed and it became more difficult to mobilize workers in pursuit of broader objectives.

In seeking to explain the character of steward organization in Birmingham, a number of the authority's structural features were clearly of importance. Birmingham City Council was responsible for carrying out a broad range of functions in a highly urbanized and densely populated area. These features necessitated the employment of a very large and diversified workforce which gave rise to a very large and diversified steward body.

Stewards could interact at the level of the authority on a regular basis. The Birmingham area, although more 'sprawling' than compact, did at least allow stewards and workers to move around it without major problems of distance or poor transport facilities. As an urban authority

and England's 'Second City', Birmingham had a comprehensive infrastructure, an accessible public transport system, and a sophisticated road network.

It was the size and the diversity of the Birmingham workforce and steward body which contributed significantly to the fragmentation of steward organization. As a metropolitan district council, Birmingham provided more services than any other authority type with the exception of an outer London Borough. The wide range of occupational groups needed to provide this range of services enhanced the likelihood of fragmentation in steward organization. But it was diversity, particularly in alliance with the size of the steward body, which presented near insurmountable problems to the creation of a co-ordinated and unified steward organization. Not only were there well over 600 stewards representing manual workers, but the specific occupational, sectional and departmental groups of workers and stewards were large enough to justify the development of separate and exclusive organization.

Certain structural features of the authority had a less direct but still significant influence upon steward organization through their impact upon management structure and behaviour. The wide range of functions provided for such a large population dictated the need for a complex management structure. This management structure was particularly important in shaping patterns of stewards' representation and interaction. Steward constituencies and bodies within which stewards could meet mirrored in many instances, organizational or functional features of the management structure.

The impact of structural features upon the organization and

operation of the personnel function was particularly important. The systematic development of such a highly organized personnel function was perhaps a more difficult process in an authority with a large and diverse workforce, but from a management viewpoint, it was also essential. Maintaining tight control over personnel practices was a difficult task where so many individual service departments existed. These departments were directly responsible for their own workforces, and they had developed their own styles and structures of management. It was, however, this combination of features which could lead to the emergence of a 'patchwork' of uncontrollable personnel practices.

Management's need for a rationalized personnel function does not necessarily produce the will or the ability to create one. In Birmingham such a personnel function had been successfully established. The personnel sections within each service department handled specific departmental problems, whereas the organizationally distinct Personnel Department had the decision-making authority to deal with major negotiable issues.

The organization and operation of the personnel function were seen to have a profound effect upon the role of stewards in Birmingham. The emergence of departmental personnel staff, providing ready points of reference, enhanced the steward's ability to pursue the problem-resolution and communication aspects of their role. There was even evidence that these personnel sections sought directly to encourage particular branch officers in these activities. Thus, a number of branch officers were given generous time-off for union work or placed in jobs which facilitated the carrying out of union duties.

The centralization of decision-making authority in the Personnel Department did, however, limit steward and branch officer involvement in effective bargaining. The Personnel Department preferred to deal with full-time union officers, especially where issues applying to broad sections of the workforces were under discussion. This effectively excluded lay union representatives from dealing with many negotiable issues. It also encouraged a certain degree of lay officer dependence upon full-time union officers

The Personnel Department's influence upon the steward's role and upon the shape of steward organization was further traced to its instigation of a comprehensive network of consultative structures in all service departments. The scope these bodies offered for steward interaction varied from one department to another but they generally provided a forum within which a number of stewards could pursue the problem-resolution and communication aspects of their roles. These bodies were also of importance in institutionally reinforcing the fragmentation of the workforce. They allowed stewards from particular parts of the workforce to meet alone and they encouraged the generation and articulation of issues relevant to only certain groups of workers.

The significance of councillor attitudes to the development of workplace organization was not as clearly discernable as in the other authorities studied. Councillors were neither as distant from industrial relations as in Dorset, nor as closely involved as in Hackney. It was apparent, however, that any encouragement from councillors was likely to be forthcoming from a Labour council. The finest illustration of this was the signing of a union membership agreement with a Labour council at a time when the level of union density did not obviously warrant one.

Of the influential union factors distinguished in the analytical framework, the branch structure had a particularly significant effect upon workplace organization. In contrast to any of the other case study authorities, Birmingham's unions had service-based branches. The emergence of this type of branch was again partly related to the size and diversity of the manual workforce. A single branch covering the entire workforce would have been far too large and amorphous to operate effectively. The existence of large organizational and functional groups of workers justified the creation of specialist branches. Even so, branch structure was not a completely dependent factor. A number of service-based branches in Birmingham were quite small. The GMWU Baths Branch, for example, had just 200 members.

The service-based branches of NUPE and the GMWU had two main effects upon steward organization. Firstly, they allowed branch resources to be devoted exclusively to specific sections of the workforce. This was of particular importance in seeking to explain the comprehensive development of steward representation amongst many groups of workers. Attention was drawn to the time and effort made by branch officers in actively encouraging workers to elect their own stewards. Secondly, these branches provided yet further institutional reinforcement for occupational and functional fragmentation. In the other authorities studied, branch structure provided an opportunity for workers and stewards from different groups to interact; in Birmingham they confined interaction to these very groups. As continually stressed, the manner in which branches dovetailed into joint union-management structures further encouraged the development of self-contained steward organizations. The branches were particularly important in allowing this dovetailing to take place, for it was the

basis upon which they had developed rather than the basis of joint union-management structures which was so distinctive about Birmingham.

The shape of branches in Birmingham tended to place the full-time union officer in a position of secondary importance to branch officers as an influence upon the development and operation of workplace organization. Full-time union officials reflected to some extent the fragmentation of steward organization rather than rising above it. Thus NUPE, as noted, had appointed specialist area officers to deal with different parts of the workforce. This degree of specialization did allow full-time officers to devote their time and energy to developing workplace organization and a number of examples of this were cited above. However, in contrast to Dorset, full-time officials did not hold unique authority-wide positions. Branch secretaries were also responsible for all workers across the whole of the authority rather than particular areas within it. Furthermore, with their higher degree of specialized interest, branch secretaries were better equipped and more able to deal with particular sections of the workforce.

Multi-unionism in Birmingham did not serve to fragment steward organization further. Indeed, the manner in which inter-union relations were structured around occupational and functional groups was particularly striking. The clearest example noted was the creation of a joint shop stewards committee amongst parks' representatives, although there were also a number of instances of stewards from different unions co-operating in joint union-management bodies. Tensions between certain unions had contributed to the ineffectiveness of union bodies cutting across departments, but the operation of these structures was hampered far more by the sheer size and diversity of the steward body and the entrenched

occupational, sectional or departmental interest which had developed within it.

The size and diversity of the Birmingham City Council workforce has been seen to have contributed significantly to the fragmentation of steward organization. Attention now turns to an authority employing a workforce which, in terms of size and diversity, could not have been a greater contrast.

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1. The 1982 local government elections saw the defeat of the Labour Council and the return of a Conservative administration.

2. It is interesting to note that on returning to power the Conservative Council gave twelve months notice of the termination of the union membership agreement. The agreement will cease to operate from July 1983. During the brief period in which the agreement was operative it had only a limited effect upon levels of union membership. Membership amongst full-time workers was already close to 100%, but to recruit those part-time workers not in unions would have required either changes in the views of the workers themselves or the expenditure of high levels of union resources, in terms of time and effort, to recruit them.

3. Art Gallery and museums in Birmingham provided the only example in any of the four authorities studied of 'shift' stewards. Two stewards were found in a number of such establishments, each representing workers on a particular shift.

4. There was, for example, a senior steward within each of the four management districts of the Children's Services Section of the Residential Day Care Division.

5. This absence of significant issues becomes more apparent when consideration is given to the operation of these bodies in looking at the role of the steward. It is worth noting, however, that the overwhelming proportion of issues related to complaints about facilities. It was perhaps indicative of the character and importance of these issues that the last Baths JCC held devoted a considerable amount of time discussing the thickness of toilet paper to be used in staff conveniences.

6. The NUPE Playing Field Branch, the other branch covering a specific group of parks workers, was not a particularly strong branch. Its membership and steward body were not large and it did not have a steward committee. Talks were in fact under way for this branch to become integrated into the NUPE General Branch.

7. The branch steward meetings of the NUPE General Branch were left primarily to disseminate information, although individual stewards occasionally brought difficult issues for the Branch Secretary to deal with. The average attendance at these meetings was put at 20 out of the branch's 70 stewards by the Branch Secretary. At the meeting attended only 13 were present.

8. When plans for a network of consultative structures were originally

drawn up by the Personnel Department the establishment of an authority JCC for manual workers had been envisaged. Whether the creation of this body would have encouraged greater unity within the Birmingham steward body must be left to speculation. It remains possible that such a body would have encouraged the generation of issues of concern to the total manual workforce, provided opportunities for stewards from different departments to interact, enhanced the stewards' bargaining role and provided more contact with the Personnel Department. It is perhaps more likely that such a body, very similar to the one created in Dorset, would simply have been unable to operate effectively. The fragmentation of the steward body was too deep-rooted and institutionally reinforced to have encouraged the functioning of such a body.

9. This body may well be re-established with the return of a Conservative Administration in 1982 committed to severe cuts in services and manpower.

10. Negotiations for this scheme had only just commenced during research. It was, however, clear that although stewards would be present, detailed negotiations were to be undertaken by the NUPE Area Officer. Indeed the officer in question admitted as much when, at a meeting of workers held at the laundry to discuss the scheme, he stated that 'I'm not going to negotiate a scheme for you unless you're sure you want that scheme'.

11. The subsequent dissatisfaction amongst mobile workers with this bonus scheme was related, by the T&GWU Parks Branch Secretary, to this absence of worker representation from its negotiation.

12. This variation in the ease with which bonus was earned stemmed from the existence of a supplementary time device in the static scheme which was missing from the mobile scheme. Any work not completed in the allocated time could be finished in supplementary time without loss of earnings.

13. These management-arranged meetings, held on an area basis every six months, were particularly important as a means of contact between home helps and their stewards. After management business had been completed, stewards and full-time union officers were allowed to address the meetings. It was at these meetings, for example, that individuals came forth to act as stewards.

14. Analysis of the minutes of divisional JCC meetings revealed just how important issues related to equipment and facilities were and how effective these JCCs were in preventing them from filtering through to the Central JCC. At 10 divisional JCCs analysed 55% of the issues which arose concerned equipment or facilities.

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CHAPTER 7

CRAWLEY NON-METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Crawley District was established as an overspill area for South London and had come to constitute a rather unusual 'working class island' in the 'rural sea' of West Sussex. The council covered an area of 9,000 acres and had a population of 72,000. Only a small workforce was needed to provide a limited range of services to a population of this size within such a compact area. In total there were 900 employees of whom 420 were manual and 70 engineering craftsmen and building operatives.

Crawley was unusual in that it was the only Labour-controlled district council in the whole of West Sussex. The council was composed of thirty-six councillors, eighteen of whom were Labour members and eight Conservative. Labour control had been firmly established from the outset in an electorate whose roots were firmly embedded within the working class communities of South London. During its twenty-five year history the council had been under Labour control for twenty-three years.

The councillors were organized into five committees. The Management Board represented the authority's strategic/policy making committee. It was a body of major importance, for six of its members formed the Personnel Sub-Committee. The four service committees operating alongside the Management Board provided some indication of the limited range of services supplied by the council: these were the Development, Recreation and Leisure, Housing, and Environmental Health Committees.

Management and the Organization of Work

The structure of management within Crawley was far less complex than in any of the other authorities studied. The manual workforce was divided into just two blocks of almost equal size, employed by the Technical Department and the Recreation and Leisure Department (Table 7.1). Within both departments it was possible to precisely specify the management divisions under which the limited range of occupational groups were to be found. In the Technical Department, refuse workers, highway workers and roadsweepers all came within the Engineering Services Division, whilst the 200 parks workers were covered by the Outdoor Recreation Division. Table 7.1 provides an indication of the occupational homogeneity of the workforce and, by implication, the common employment status of most workers. Thus, most of the occupational tasks were performed by full-time male workers. Only 50 part-time workers were employed by Crawley.

Table 7.1 Crawley Departmental Structure and Workforce Sizes

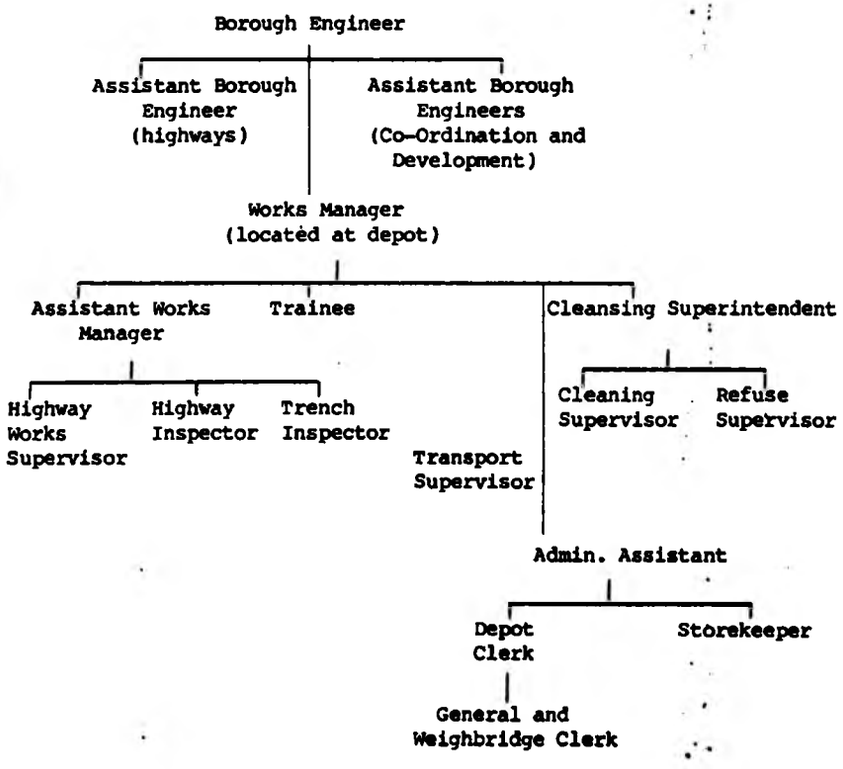
Department	Division	Manual Workforce
Technical	Engineering Services (refuse workers, highway workers, roadsweepers)	190
	Design	
	Contract Supervision	
	Direct Labour (mainly craftsmen and builders)	
Recreation and Leisure	Outdoor Recreation (parks workers)	200
	Indoor Recreation (Crawley Leisure Centre)	30

Source: Personnel Section

Detailed consideration of the management structure in the Engineering

Service Division and the Recreation and Leisure Department (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) revealed that management had little scope or need to fragment the manual workforce along organizational lines. In the Engineering Services Division, for example, just one central depot existed. All refuse and highway workers operated from this one central point with lower line management - the works manager and the bonus clerks - situated within it as well. Yet it was interesting to note that even within an authority as limited in size as Crawley it was still felt necessary to create four geographical areas within the Outdoor Recreation Division to organize the parks workforce.

Figure 7.1 Engineering Services Division



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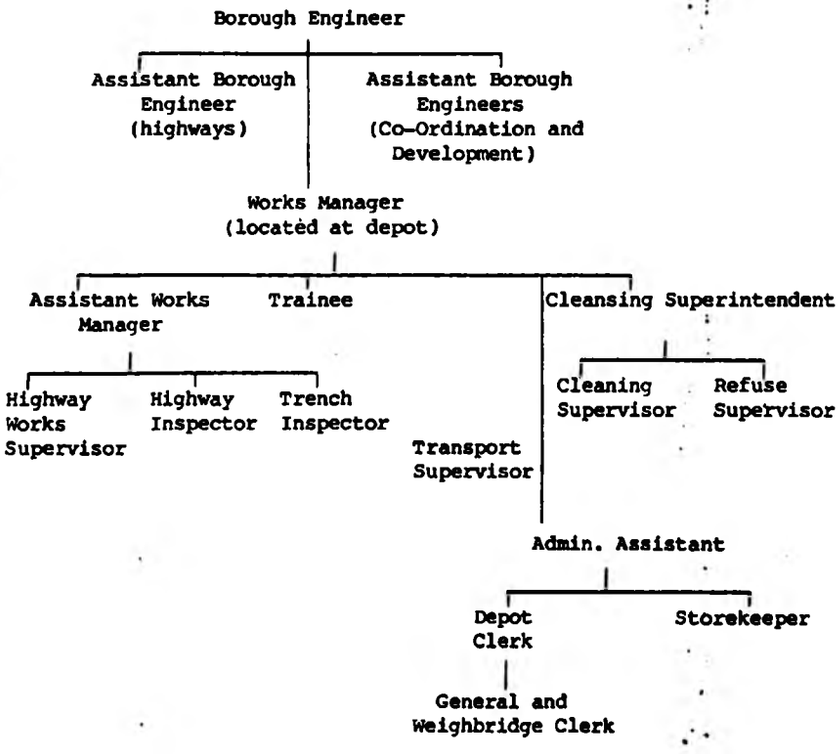
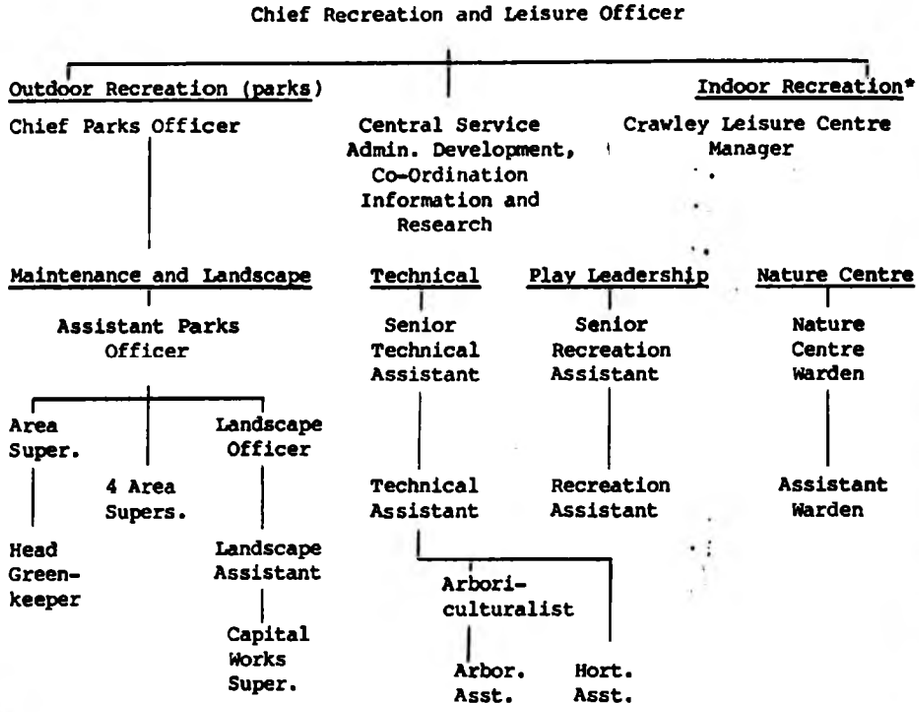
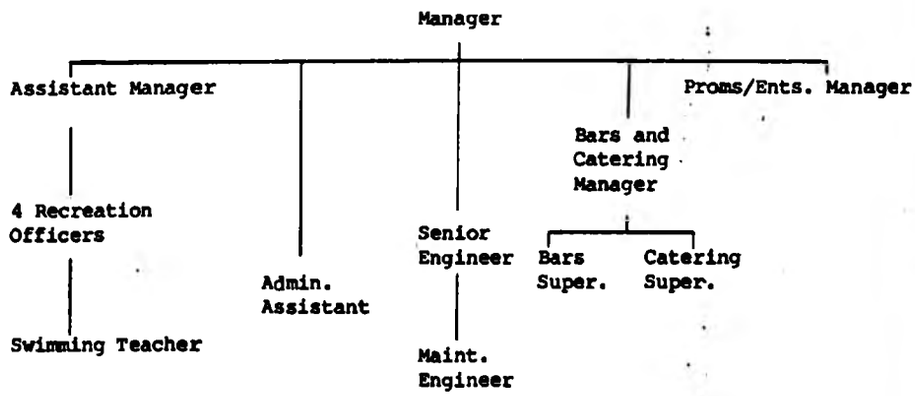


Source: Personnel Section

Figure 7.2 Recreation and Leisure Department



*Indoor Recreation



Source: Personnel Section

In Crawley, the Chief Executive's Department was very important in the handling of industrial relations. In contrast to the three other authorities, there was not a separate Personnel Department; the Personnel Section was part of the Chief Executive's Department. It consisted of just three officers; the Personnel Officer, the Assistant Personnel Officer, specializing in health and safety and training, and a Personnel Assistant. The Management Services Section, responsible for the implementation of bonus schemes, was also located in this department. The existence of these two sections within the Chief Executive's Department was significant in two respects. Firstly, personnel officers and management services officers had direct access to,and could on occasion act with the authority of, the Chief Executive. Secondly, the Chief Executive was encouraged to become actively involved in industrial relations. This close involvement of the Chief Executive was one of the outstanding and distinctive features of industrial relations in Crawley(1).

Trade Union Organization

In contrast to the other authorities where membership was dispersed amongst at least three unions, only two unions were recognized for manual workers in Crawley: NUPE and the GMWU. Nevertheless, if there was a potential source of fragmentation in the Crawley workforce it was one which could be traced to the pattern of union membership. The union density level within Crawley was high at nearly 100%. The two unions had almost identical levels of membership, but members within each union were confined to specific departments and divisions. The GMWU dominated the refuse, highways, and roadsweeping workers of the Technical Department and also had a small group of members in Crawley Leisure Centre. NUPE membership was concentrated totally amongst parks workers within the

Outdoor Recreation Division. This distinctive pattern of union membership was enshrined within the Authority's 1980 union membership agreement. This agreement distinguished clear 'spheres of influence', confirming and limiting the presence of just one union amongst particular divisional and departmental groups of workers. The effect of this pattern of membership was to reinforce departmental groups by union groups.

Both the GMWU and NUPE had branches based very generally and loosely upon the Crawley area. The 1,000 strong GMWU Branch was open to workers from all industries and, covering the Crawley industrial estate, had a very large proportion of its members in the private manufacturing sector. Although less hetrogeneous, the NUPE Branch, in contrast to other NUPE branches studied, included both local government and health service workers. Particularly significant was the fact that in neither branch were the branch officers employed by Crawley Council. The NUPE Branch Secretary and Chairman, for example, were hospital ancillary workers. These features of both union branches were to limit their importance in the structuring and operation of workplace organization in the authority.

In this case study attention also needs to be given to the two unions with membership amongst the authority's building operatives and engineering craftsmen, namely, the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Trade Union (EETPTU) and the Union of Construction and Allied Trades and Technicians (UCATT). Workplace organization in Crawley differed from organization analysed in other authorities in that it embraced engineering craftsmen and building operatives as well as manual workers. All of these groups of workers tended to be involved in the same joint union and joint union-management bodies and were very often covered by the same local agreements. The EETPTU and UCATT were, for example,

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included within the union membership agreement.

A further reflection of the workforces' limited occupational, sectional and departmental diversity was the absence of complex joint union-management machinery. Only two joint bodies operated in Crawley. One was the Parks Committee which enabled a small number of stewards to meet senior parks management. The second and, more important, was the Joint Works Committee (JWC), a body similar to the one identified in Hackney, which allowed worker representatives to meet directly with councillors in the presence of senior council officers. A consultative committee had at one time existed. This had enabled workers' representatives to meet with council officers alone. Workers' representatives had withdrawn from this body, however, leaving them with an uncomplicated route to their employers.

Crawley District Council was, therefore, a small employer. It carried out a limited range of functions over not too large a geographical area and for a relatively small population. The small manual workforce employed was compact and relatively undifferentiated occupationally. It was a workforce organized within just two departments and equally divided between two unions with general branches. Furthermore, it was a workforce employed by a traditionally strong Labour Council to which representatives had direct access through joint machinery.

PATTERNS OF STEWARD ORGANIZATION

Types of Steward

The scope for development in steward representation in Crawley was limited. The nature of the workforce and the manner in which it had been organized both by management and the unions had reduced the potential groups and the number of entities which could form the basis of representation. A fairly comprehensive system of representation had been established in the authority for a number of years and there were very few opportunities for further developments[2].

Table 7.2 below indicates that four entities formed the basis of steward representation in Crawley. Of these four, however, only two, the management defined area and the depot, had come to structure the constituency of more than one steward. In the absence of schools and social service residential homes there were few establishments upon which to base representation. Indeed, only one 'establishment steward' had emerged in Crawley, the steward for the Leisure Centre. This steward represented all thirty workers in the Centre from quite a range of occupational groups including cleaners, catering staff and recreation assistants.

Table 7.2 Crawley Steward Types

Entity	Group	Member Characteristics
Establishment	(a) multi-occupation	static worker
Depot	(a) sectional group	mobile workers
Management Area	(a) single section	mobile/static workers
Authority	(a) sectional group	scattered/isolated workers

Similarly, there was only one depot within Crawley, although it contained a wider range of occupational and functional groups. Two manual sectional groups operated from the depot, namely, the highways and cleansing section workers. It was difficult, however, to distinguish whether the sectional or occupational group had proved more significant as a basis of representation. The cleansing section corresponded with the refuse workers in the depot. At various times in the past the ninety refuse workers had been represented by two stewards but during research they had only one[3]. The reverse process had taken place in the case of the highway workers, one steward giving way to two. Each of these stewards was responsible for a cluster of highway occupational groups. One steward represented street lighting workers, paviours and depot yardmen, totalling eleven members. The other steward represented highway labourers, drivers and patching gang workers of which there were sixteen in total. Note should also be made of the building and craftsmen stewards based within the same depot. Bricklayers, painters, plumbers and carpenters each had their own steward. These four stewards, added to the three manual stewards, therefore produced a significant concentration of stewards within the depot.

The management defined geographical area was the basis of representation for parks workers. Indeed, an extremely 'rationalized' system of representation had developed for these workers, with one steward for each of the five management areas. In contrast to Birmingham, where management areas had also been seized upon to shape parks constituencies, representation did not develop within individual parks as well. In many instances the individual parks within areas were not large enough to employ major concentrations of workers. The Crawley parks stewards, therefore, represented both mobile and static workers across

specific and tightly defined areas.

The authority developed as the basis of representation for two occupational groups of workers within the same section, namely, street cleaners and toilet attendants. These two groups were represented by the same stewards. There was little alternative to the authority as a basis of representation for these workers as they were scattered and isolated throughout the authority. But it was the organization of work which prompted them to be represented by the same steward. Street cleaners in Crawley, unlike their counterparts in Hackney and Birmingham, did not return collectively to a central depot along with other cleansing workers. Instead they returned daily to individual sheds where they left their equipment overnight. These sheds were very often attached to manned public conveniences. It was the close proximity of street cleaners and public convenience attendants which prompted the election of a single steward.

The different basis of representation in Crawley had been exploited with a significant degree of rigour. It is clear, however, that this still only produced a very small steward body. Only nineteen stewards, including building and craftsmen stewards, existed in Crawley. The limited scope for the development of representation was partly related to features specific to Crawley. The pattern of union membership, for example, with the absence of multi-unionism in departments, excluded the possibility of the union group forming the basis of representation. Yet it was the juxtaposition of a limited number of functions, performed over a small area for a small population which significantly restricted the potential scope for the development of representation. There was a clear limit on the range of occupational

groups required to perform the services and on the complexity of the management structure required to organize them.

Types of Steward Organization

The existence of a steward body which was small and compact, and which provided few occupational or functional lines along which fragmentation could develop, facilitated the emergence in Crawley of a unified and integrated authority-wide steward organization. The development of such an organization was partly reflected in the considerable degree of informal interaction, both of an organized and unorganized kind, taking place between stewards in Crawley. Complex networks of informal contact encompassing all stewards did not exist. However, compared with the other authorities studied, the level of informal interaction was significant enough to allow identification of definite lines of communication between a number of stewards.

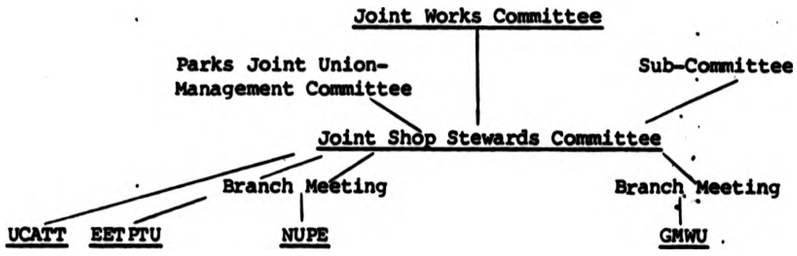
The limited size of the Crawley steward body allowed the different stewards to become known to one another. These stewards, who met in the same formal bodies, were able to develop common interests and concerns. As noted in the Dorset study, membership of common joint bodies encouraged informal interaction. In Crawley's Central Depot, for example, a number of stewards had considerable opportunities to meet informally and, on occasion, reason for doing so. Thus, all stewards shared the same steward's office in the depot and there were instances when depot stewards met alone or with management to discuss issues related to bonus, facilities and equipment.

There was also some evidence of informal contact revolving around key union figures in Crawley. These representatives were not, however,

branch officers. As has been stressed above, the NUPE and GMWU branch officers were not employed by the authority and had very little expertise or interest in authority matters. In the case of the GMWU members, the two highway stewards, both working together on street lighting, represented key points of contact. These two stewards were mobile and actively sought to maintain contact with fellow GMWU stewards representing Leisure Centre workers, refuse workers and roadsweepers and toilet attendants. It was this type of contact which had encouraged and supported the Leisure Centre steward in her early days as a lay officer.

Three essential features characterizing formal steward interaction within Crawley justified the description of the steward organization as unified and integrated. Firstly, the major bodies within which this type of interaction took place, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee and Joint Works Committee, were based firmly upon the authority; that is, they embraced the total area of the authority rather than particular geographical areas within it (Figure 7.3). Secondly, these two bodies were open to all stewards regardless of group and allowed stewards from different departments to meet. Thirdly, a significant proportion of the steward body had taken advantage of the opportunities to meet within these bodies.

Figure 7.3 Formal Steward Interaction in Crawley



Focusing in greater detail upon the joint committees, it needs to be stressed that those structures which might fragment the steward body along organizational or functional lines were of very limited significance in Crawley. In contrast to the other three authorities studied, branch structures were not important in shaping patterns of steward organization. The general basis of branches, and the relatively small proportion of the branch membership made up of Crawley council workers, prompted only marginal steward interest and involvement in branch proceedings. This absence of interaction within branch structures was crucial in undermining any close allegiance to the union. However, non-involvement in union structures did not completely preclude the possibility of division along union lines. This will become apparent when consideration is given to industrial action.

A further contrast with the other authorities studied was the absence in Crawley of a sophisticated and comprehensive network of joint union-management consultative or negotiating committees that encouraged interaction between stewards from particular occupations, sections or departments. The one and only body open to stewards representing particular groups of workers was the Parks joint union-management committee. This committee was important as a forum within which parks worker problems could be raised and, with the Chief Parks Officer usually present, very often resolved. However, only two parks stewards were regularly in attendance at meetings, so this committee scarcely qualifies as a significant forum for steward interaction, or a means by which a distinctive parks steward organization or outlook could develop.

The long established Joint Shop Stewards Committee, founded over eight years ago, was the central body in Crawley's steward organization.

Open to all blue collar stewards, it provided the greatest opportunities for steward interaction. Over the last four years (1977 to 1981), over half the total steward body had regularly attended the quarterly JSSC meetings[4]. Furthermore, this body appeared to encourage a unified, authority-wide perspective amongst stewards. It was possible to distinguish five related, but analytically distinct, processes taking place within the JSSC: communication, problem-resolution, JWC agenda formulation, decision/policy making and co-ordination. More detailed consideration will be given to certain of these processes when attention turns to the role of the steward. Consideration of the latter two processes, however, gives a particularly clear indication of the unity which could develop.

Many of the issues coming to the JSSC for discussion concerned only parts of the workforce. However, a number of decisions and policies clearly related to the total workforce. At various times over the preceeding four years, the JSSC had decided that temporary employees should join a union, that no further apprentices should be employed, that management proposals on changes in methods of wage payment should be rejected, and that the government 5% wage limit of 1978/79 should be condemned. Furthermore, the JSSC was able to attempt co-ordination in pursuit of common aims. For example, attempts were made to co-ordinate action during the 1978-79 winter dispute and during a TUC Day of Action on May 14 1981.

The openness of the Joint Works Committee further encouraged the emergence of a unified and integrated steward organization within Crawley by providing significant potential for steward interaction. In other authorities studied, the number of stewards able and willing to

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participate in joint union-management structures was only a very small proportion of the steward body. In Crawley this was not the case as the nine worker representatives entitled to sit upon the JWC represented half the total steward body. Although the full allocation of representatives was seldom taken up, an average of seven stewards attended the quarterly meetings(5). Care was also taken to ensure that those stewards attending were representative of the types of workers within the workforce. The JWC constitution, for example, stressed that 'due provision shall be made for representation of various departments of the service'. The union side operating at the time was composed of two parks', two highways' and two building operatives' stewards, plus the Leisure Centre, roadsweeper and play leader steward(6). Although more detailed consideration will be given to the processes taking place within the JWC below, it was clear that the authority-wide perspective arising from the JSSC was maintained in the JWC. Of the eighty-one issues considered within the meetings, forty-five (55%) were of concern to all workers.

Stewards within Crawley, therefore, interacted with some degree of regularity in bodies open to all stewards within the authority. The steward body was not fragmented by the possibility of interaction within bodies open to stewards from only particular organizational, occupational or functional groups. In contrast to the other authorities studied, neither union nor departmentally-based consultative structures proved significant as forums within which stewards met. This pattern of interaction had allowed and encouraged an authority-wide perspective to develop. This was reflected in the issues of common interest to the total manual workforce arising within the JSSC and the JWC.

This picture does, however, have to be qualified in two respects. Firstly, the unity achieved amongst stewards within the JSSC and the JWC was not always, indeed not usually, translated into unity of action within the workforce itself. Thus, whilst stewards might develop a common policy, the workforce's willingness to follow such a policy was limited. Secondly, even in a workforce displaying such limited occupational diversity, the potential for fragmentation was still present. A number of issues of concern to specific groups of workers emerged in Crawley which threatened to undermine unity. These issues related, in particular, to attempts by management to make manpower savings as financial controls tightened. Both steward inability to generalize the unity of their approach to the workforce and the developing fragmentation of the steward body became particularly apparent in considering the role of the individual stewards and the character of industrial action.

Role of the Steward

Stewards in Crawley had considerable scope to pursue all aspects of their role both within and outside of joint union-management structures. This stemmed primarily from steward access to decision-making levels of the council officer structure and, perhaps more importantly, access to the council itself. The Labour Council of Crawley was willing to grant extensive access and to encourage a favourable atmosphere within which stewards could operate and the stewards made conscious attempts to take advantage of these opportunities.

The personnel function was centralized within the Chief Executive's Department. The Personnel and Management Services Sections were responsible for recruitment within service departments, for more general terms and conditions, training, welfare, manpower planning and reviews of

establishment levels, as well as the introduction and monitoring of bonus schemes. However, whilst in Dorset and Birmingham steward involvement in the operation of a centralized personnel function was limited, in Crawley steward participation was extensive.

An initial indication of the scope open to stewards to perform the different aspects of their role was given in the unusually formal and explicit management formulation of the steward's role. This formulation was presented as a list of 'industrial relations functions' in management's recognition form for union stewards. Three aspects of the steward's role, in particular, were recognized: problem resolution, with the stewards allowed to 'pursue member complaints and difficulties'; communication, with the steward acting as 'a link between management and employees'; and 'consultation with management on behalf of members'.

A further indication of the opportunities provided for the steward to perform his or her role were the generous facilities provided. In addition to minimum entitlements, locally agreed facilities had also been supplied. They included facilities to allow the election of stewards in working hours, facilities for stewards to interview members privately, facilities to hold meetings with members with prior management approval, and the use of office facilities to conduct agreed business. Detailed analysis of steward activities within Crawley revealed that many stewards were prepared to accept the opportunities provided and to pursue with vigour those aspects of their role clearly recognized by management, as well as the less explicitly legitimized issues of negotiation.

Focusing initially upon the steward's role outside of Joint Works Committee, it was clear that the introduction of bonus schemes within

Crawley had a significant influence upon the scope for some stewards to negotiate and resolve problems. Bonus schemes had a long history in Crawley. Based upon an industrial estate and within close proximity to Gatwick Airport, Crawley Council had for many years been operating in a tight labour market. Bonus schemes were used early on as a method of attracting and maintaining labour in these circumstances. The earliest scheme was introduced for refuse collectors in 1956, reflecting the need to attract labour, and it was not based upon work study. It provided significant opportunities for increased earnings as bonus was paid simply for the collection of a given number of bins. The bonus increased pro rata with every national pay award and was not modified to take account of improved equipment and alteration in tip sites. Schemes for highway and building workers rapidly followed the NBPI Report No.29, a large proportion of the work again being unmeasured, allowing some worker manipulation in order to maintain bonus earnings.

The early introduction of schemes limited the possibility of tracing steward procedural involvement to the initial negotiation of schemes. It was, however, possible to analyse such involvement in the introduction of the more recent parks' scheme and the re-negotiation of the highways' scheme. The most striking feature of both the parks negotiations and the highway re-negotiation was the extent of steward involvement(7). Whilst accompanied by full-time officers at various times, stewards were present and played an important part at all stages of discussion - from the preliminary feasibility talks through detailed negotiations to a presentation of their views to councillors. Furthermore, during the work study exercise, stewards had access through line management to all information collected by the management services section.

Consideration of the three council officers involved in the re-negotiation of the highways' bonus scheme leaves little doubt that stewards were participating in a genuine bargaining situation. The Management Services Officer was present in an advisory capacity to the Technical Department and constructed a scheme on their behalf. The Borough Engineer was in attendance as the senior departmental line officer specifically responsible for highway workers. Finally, the Chief Executive, the leading council officer, was present and actively involved in discussions. The very rapid resort to the councillors over this issue was also particularly striking. After feasibility talks and only two negotiating sessions, both stewards and council officers presented their views to councillors for an authoritative decision

Bonus schemes gave rise to the few substantive bargainable issues in Crawley, but they were the basis of many problems dealt with by stewards, as in the other authorities studied. Highways and refuse stewards, in particular, pointed to the high volume of problems arising from bonus schemes. There was also a recognition amongst council officers that bonus schemes were the major source of industrial relations problems. As the Personnel Officer stressed, 'I work closely with the Management Services Officer because nearly all the industrial relations issues revolve around bonus'. The character of schemes in Crawley necessitated the completion of time sheets, the need to relate correct codes to work tasks, and generally a considerable amount of 'paperwork'. This gave rise to worker frustrations and increased the likelihood of errors made on the workers' and management sides[8].

The ability of stewards to handle bonus problems was considerably facilitated by a procedural change by which the servicing of incentive

schemes was transferred from the Management Services' Section to individual service departments. When it was the responsibility of the Management Services' Section, grievance procedure stated that problems should be pursued via line management to the bonus clerks. Bonus clerks, however, became much more accessible following their move to the individual service departments, and one stage of procedure was therefore effectively rendered redundant, namely the approach from service department to Management Services' Section. It would, however, be a mistake to over-emphasise the power of grievance procedure in structuring steward behaviour in Crawley. Bonus clerks, in the case of highway workers, were situated in the Central Depot and thus easily approached regardless of procedure. Similarly, and despite procedure again, the accessibility of senior line management and the Personnel Officer on issues outside of bonus encouraged stewards to go direct to them, enhancing their effectiveness as bargainers and resolvers of problems.

Most major bargainable issues and worker grievances were injected directly into the powerful Joint Works Committee. There was, however, some steward involvement in ad hoc bargaining and informal handling of problems outside of this body. On occasions, stewards approached the Works Manager, who was available daily in the Central Depot, to discuss minor organisational or technical details of work[9]. The two highways stewards were also in regular contact with the Borough Engineer discussing organisational or technical issues with perhaps broader departmental implications. Outside of individual service departments, some stewards were involved in negotiations over more general authority-wide terms and conditions. It was a further indication of the unified approach of the Crawley stewards that in 1980, the Sub-Committee of the JSSC, involving just three stewards, could reach agreement with

management on a revision of the disciplinary and grievance procedures, a new level of highway and building standby payments, and an assurance that bonus clerks would not freely alter time sheets.

The importance of the steward as a communicator of management information was freely accepted. Workplace meetings at which stewards informed members of changes in terms and conditions of employment were occasionally held. The highway stewards,for example, explained changes related to the re-negotiated bonus schemes. The JSSC also proved a significant forum within which information could be disseminated. Information of concern to specific groups was given, including reports on relevant council service committee meetings, as well as information of concern to the total workforce, such as the details of the authority's new health and safety agreement.

Analysis of the final aspect of the steward's role - maintenance of constituencies - provided confirmation of findings from other authorities rather than any new insights. The problems of maintenance faced by the Leisure Centre steward and highways and refuse stewards were limited. Although the Leisure Centre steward had initially relied upon the more experienced highway stewards to resolve certain problems, as an 'establishment steward', problems of contact with members were not great. The depot highway and refuse stewards also had opportunities to meet and discuss issues with members. They returned to the depot, not only at the beginning and end of the day, but for breakfast as well, two hours after the start of work.

The two steward types facing the greatest difficulties in servicing members were the parks stewards and the roadsweeper and toilet

attendant steward. These were the stewards with members scattered over geographical areas of varying sizes. Mobility, or access to mobility, were again found to be crucial resources in maintenance. One of the parks stewards was a driver, whilst the roadsweeper steward used her mobile supervisor to pass on information or transport her if the need arose. Whether all of the parks stewards were able to service members satisfactorily was, however, open to some debate. The preoccupation of at least one parks steward with his own personal problems at one JSSC meeting observed suggested a failure on his part to relate adequately to his members.

The ability of Crawley stewards to perform their roles, particularly bargaining and problem-resolution, was enhanced by the existence of the Joint Works Committee. This body, within which worker representatives met directly with councillors, was viewed by stewards as an important opportunity to deal effectively with issues. Some indication of its importance was given by the steward withdrawal from the Consultative Committee, a forum which had allowed joint union-council officer discussions. This withdrawal had ostensibly been prompted by a local dispute over Christmas Holiday arrangements in 1979, but it is more usefully viewed as an attempt by worker representatives to establish a more direct and uncomplicated route to councillors.

A wide range of different types of issues emerged within the JWC (Table 7.3) and a very high proportion of them came from the employee side (Table 7.4). This volume and variety of issues may well have stemmed from the possibility of issues flowing freely from the various parts of the workforce, given the representatives of the

union side of the JWC and the opportunity to formulate an agenda at the well-attended JSSC. As noted above, many of the issues emerging within the JWC were also of concern to the total workforce rather than particular groups within it. The proceedings of more recent JWCs, however, suggested that the unity implied by the discussion of so many broad issues may have been breaking down. The re-negotiation of the highways' and building operatives' bonus schemes and the need, dictated by legislation, for the latter group of workers to compete with outside contractors for council work, encouraged JWC proceedings to focus more narrowly upon certain groups. As these various groups came under increasing mangement pressure to reduce manpower costs, there was also an increasing tendency for JWC representatives to adopt a more parochial approach.

Table 7.3 Frequency of Issues Arising

Health and Safety	12
Wages/Pay	9
Terms of Employment	4
Working Arrangement	9
Holidays	3
Bonus	6
Gradings	-
Facilities	8
Equipment	1
Training	2
Protective Clothing	4
Hours	-
Manning	7
Miscellaneous	16
	81

Table 7.4 Origin of Issues

Initiator	
Employers' Side Item	19
Employee Side Item	57
Origin Indeterminant	5

The character of issues arising within the JWC (Table 7.5) provided a better indication of the aspects of the steward's role pursued within it. The number of employee grievances was surprisingly low given the absence of union-council officer structures likely to filter out many such issues. This finding was perhaps indicative of the ability of the steward to resolve problems outside of the JWC, stewards and managers dealing on an ad hoc basis with such problems as they arose. Most striking, however, was the very high proportion of employee requests for changes in terms and conditions of employment emerging within the JWC.

Table 7.5 Character of Issues Arising

Employer Point of Information	10
Employer Request for Information	1
Employer Request for Change in Terms/Conditions	7
Employer Grievance	1
Employee Point of Information	1
Employee Request for Information	9
Employee Request for Change in Terms/Conditions	31
Employee Grievance	16
Non-Classifiable	5

This concentration upon worker requests for change, a feature

the Crawley JWC shared with the similarly constructed Hackney JWC, was largely a consequence of the decision-making authority of the employer's side. It was chaired by the leader of the council and was composed of councillors from the Personnel Sub-Committee. In attendance with councillors at JWC meetings was the Chief Executive, who played an active part, the Personnel Officer and often senior line officers such as the Borough Engineer and the Treasurer. It was the undoubted power of the employer's side which fostered a belief that progress could be made on issues and encouraged stewards to pursue their bargaining role with a significant degree of independance, as the union full-time officers were rarely in attendance.

As in Hackney, requests for change were handled in various ways. The frequency of rejection, indicated in Table 7.6, suggests that the very possibility of meeting councillors encouraged the generation of rather hopeful and ambitious requests. Agreement on issues involved a more complex set of procedures. Formally the right to accept a change in terms and conditions of employment lay with the Personnel Sub-Committee. However, overlapping membership between the Sub-Committee and the Works Committee ensured that the latter body could and did play a key role in reaching agreement. The manner in which requests were handled was influenced by such factors as the proportion of the workforce involved, the policy and financial implications, and the knowledge and experience at the disposal of the councillors. Tacit agreement on such minor changes as alterations in provision of protective clothing could be reached within the JWC, the Personnel Committee acting merely as a 'rubber stamp'. Decisions involving more fundamental changes such as improved steward facilities, would tend to be based upon council officer reports passed directly to the Personnel Sub-Committee for a final

decision. Where requests had clear policy implications, as with the union membership agreement, or financial implications, as with an increase in standby payments for certain workers, councillor acceptance in principle could be gained at the JWC. Thereafter, detailed negotiations would take place between officers and workers' representatives before reference to the Personnel Sub-Committee for final acceptance.

Table 7.6 The Handling of Employee Requests for Changes in Terms and Conditions

Fate of Requests	
Change Secured	6
Rejected	14
Compromise	5
Non-Conclusive	6

The opportunity for stewards to meet directly with councillors in the JWC without the need to filter issues through intermediary union-council officer consultative structures propelled councillors into the mainstream of industrial relations processes in Crawley. Indeed, the integration of councillors into industrial relations processes was an outstanding feature of the Crawley case study. As a result of this integration, councillor attitudes and behaviour were a very important influence upon the ability of stewards to perform their roles.

The close involvement of councillors in industrial relations processes was apparent not only in the JWC but also in the handling of bonus negotiations and, as will be noted below, in industrial disputes. It was an involvement which sprang in part from the procedural mechanisms structuring industrial relations within Crawley but also from the political

complexion of the council. The Labour councillors of Crawley had a great interest in industrial relations which reflected their own personal involvement in such processes within their own work situations. The views of the Management Services Officer, contrasting councillor interest in bonus schemes in Labour Crawley and Conservative Brighton, were particularly revealing in this respect and worth quoting at some length. He noted that, 'In Brighton we rarely got involved with councillors. I was there for nine years and on only one occasion did I go to committee...It is different here; the members tend to take a greater interest in that side of council affairs. It is their background, in that a lot of them are shop stewards. They know about bonus schemes. They tend to be wary of management and want to make sure the employees are not getting a raw deal'(10). These views were strongly echoed by the Personnel Officer who stressed that, 'Many councillors have been involved from the union side, so industrial relations work is one of their interests'.

It was the character and the form of this councillor involvement which was particularly important in influencing steward activities and this was also closely related to political complexion. The sympathies of councillors towards their manual workforce contributed, both directly and indirectly, to the creation of an atmosphere generally favourable to steward activities. Directly, this was achieved by generous stewards' facilities, the union membership agreement and the willingness to take authoritative decisions within the JWC. Indirectly, council officers were well aware of councillor sympathies and of the informal contacts which had developed between certain councillors and stewards(11). They could not help but be affected in their dealings with stewards by knowledge of these smypathies and contacts.

Yet, as in Hackney where similar relationships existed, a number of qualifications have to be made to the picture presented. Firstly, the very creation of this atmosphere led to a situation whereby any worker opposition was interpreted as 'ungratefulness' or 'biting the hand that feeds you'. Where such opposition did occur, councillor resistance could consequently be particularly strong. Secondly, the councillor sympathies made it very difficult for them to take a decision openly which was likely to affect the manual workforce adversely. On occasions this led to a 'fudging' of issues and an unwillingness to give a 'straight answer'. Many stewards in Crawley expressed a preference for a clearly stated 'no' to a request instead of a vague reply leaving them in an uncertain position(12).

In summary, it was apparent that stewards in Crawley were able to pursue with considerable vigour the different aspects of their role. This was related to the integration of sympathetic councillors into industrial relations processes, which had allowed the creation of an atmosphere conducive to steward activities, and also to the access gained to decision-making levels within the management and council structure. Whilst there was a willingness on the employer's side to grant such access, the stewards' tendency to ignore procedures and go direct to councillors indicated that stewards had contributed to its establishment themselves. The unity of steward organization manifested itself in the emergence of aims and objectives embracing the total workforce, particularly in the JWC. The next section seeks to consider whether stewards could successfully mobilize the workforce in pursuit of such ends.

Industrial Action

There was a clear discrepancy in Crawley between the professed

unity of outlook amongst stewards and the unity the workforce was prepared to display in taking industraial action. Certainly, there were occasions, particularly during national disputes, when co-ordinated action was taken. However, Crawley steward body appeared unable to convert common approaches and objectives, developed and articulated through 'open' steward structures, into solidaristic forms of industrial action.

As in Birmingham, it was interesting to note that the most prolonged campaign of industrial action waged by Crawley workers was during the 'dirty jobs' dispute of 1970. This dispute witnessed a significant degree of effective co-ordination with the GMWU and NUPE forming a joint action committee. The refuse workers acted as a vanguard during this dispute and were on strike for a total of four weeks, but at various times they were joined by parks' and sewage workers undertaking token stoppages.

Subsequent national disputes saw the enthusiasm of stewards unmatched within the workforce. The steward body was able to develop a marked degree of unity in relation to the national dispute of 1979 and a TUC Day of Action on May 14 1980. This unity was clearly expressed in resolutions passed within the JSSC. The 1979 dispute produced a resolution which stated that, 'Stewards representing NUPE, GMWU, UCATT and EETPTU and employed by Crawley Borough Council reject the call from the Prime Minister for a limit of 5% on wage rises as from 1st August... We are....indicating to our own employers that our unions will receive the whole-hearted support of our members in pursuing a vigorous campaign for a substantial increase in wages for local authority workers'. (author's emphasis) On January 22, the Day of Action which launched the

1979 dispute, widespread strike action from GMWU members - highways, refuse, leisure centre and street cleaning workers - was apparent. This was followed by an overtime ban by highway workers. At no time during any stage of the dispute, however, did the NUPE parks workers meet their steward's pledge of support. On the 14th May, the discrepancy between the resolution and action was even wider. The TUC demonstration prompted a proposal, passed by twelve votes to one, which directed, 'each steward to report back to his membership for a total shutdown on the 14th'. Instead of a 'total shutdown', no action whatsoever was taken on that day.

In contrast to Birmingham, where a very similar pattern of industrial action was distinguished, it was not possible to identify in Crawley a preoccupation with parochial interests which had undermined the willingness of workers to mobilize in pursuit of broader concerns. A number of local disputes revolving around sectional interests were identified and the most striking feature of these disputes was the speed with which most were settled. This speed of settlement sprang again from the tendency of councillors to become very quickly involved. Two local disputes analysed in detail - protests over the manner in whcih work study was carried out for the re-negotiated highways bonus schemes by highway workers in 1977 and over the enforced use of time clocks by Leisure Centre workers in 1980 - were dealt with in very similar ways. Emergency JWCs were called at short notice, attended by stewards, the GMWU full-time official and councillors. At the very same meeting it was possible to reach agreement producing a return to work.

The discrepancy between steward attitudes and worker behaviour, apparent during national disputes, was a reminder of the difficulties

faced by stewards in mobilizing a workforce which, whilst as small and undifferentiated as Crawley's, still covered a geographical area of some size. The influence of branch policies upon the ability to take unified action must also not be overlooked. The non-encroachment of branches upon industrial relations, either through branch officers or policies, was a notable feature of the Crawley case study. Branches did, however, have some influence when it came to industrial action. The general branches in Crawley were not bound by the unity reached by small groups of their stewards from just one section of their members. In the case of the 1979 dispute, which involved hospital ancillary workers as well as local government workers, the NUPE Branch had decided not to support any action. The NUPE Parks workers were to some extent bound by this policy and chose to use it to justify their failure to support other workers.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Steward organization in Crawley District Council was structurally unified and integrative. It was based firmly upon the total authority and embraced all groups of workers within the workforce including buildiing operatives and engineering craftsmen. The group of stewards was small, compact and relatively undifferentiated occupationally, and they were able to develop informal contacts with one another and meet with some regularity in 'open' bodies. Any group which could have provided a potential basis for fragmentation had not been exploited. Furthermore, any steward preoccupation with parochial interests within unified bodies was not in evidence. Indeed, the pattern of steward interaction itself both encouraged and facilitated the articulation of authority-wide perspectives and objectives.

Another outstanding feature of the Crawley case study was the extent to which stewards were provided with opportunities to pursue the different aspects of their role. The atmosphere within which industrial relations were conducted was created by a Labour council generally sympathetic to its manual workforce. It was therefore conducive to steward activities. The favourable access stewards had to decision-making levels within the management structure was of great importance. This access stemmed from contact stewards sought with senior departmental line officers and personnel officers and from the very close involvement of the Chief Executive and councillors in industrial relations, especially through the JWC.

An underlying theme running through the Crawley case study was an indication of difficulties existing in the maintenance and operation of a

unified steward organization. Whilst the possibility of fragmentation along union lines remained, it was of limited significance. Branches were notably absent from Crawley industrial relations, although when it came to industrial action, steward unity could be undermined by branch policy based upon broader considerations. The scope for fragmentation along occupational or sectional lines was of greater importance. Such fragmentation had remained latent for many years within Crawley and was beginning to emerge as different groups came under varying degrees of pressure to make manpower savings. There appeared to be an inherent instability in Crawley's unified steward organization. When issues affecting specific groups of workers reached a certain level of significance stewards sought to protect and pursue member interests in a more parochial way.

The structural features of Crawley contributed significantly to the emergence of a unified and effective steward organization. Crawley District Council, as continually stressed, was responsible for providing a limited range of services to a population covering a relatively compact geographical area. These two features together necessitated the employment of a small workforce composed of very few distinct occupational or functional groups. These characteristics of the workforce came to influence the type of steward body which emerged. Even in an authority where nearly every conceivable group and entity had been exploited as a basis of representation, the steward body remained numerically small, geographically compact and relatively undifferentiated occupationally and functionally. The possibility of fragmentation was minimized and the likelihood of unity facilitated.

The structural features of Crawley also had a less direct influence

upon steward organization through their impact upon certain facets of management behaviour. The limited range of functions performed resulted in the need for a relatively simplified management structure. This simplicity was expressed horizontally in few service departments and vertically in rather short lines of management. This tended to expose decision-making council officers to stewards; they were easily identified and were not distanced by complex, 'multi-stage' grievance and disputes procedures.

The close procedural proximity of council officers to stewards was reinforced by close physical proximity. In an authority of Crawley's geographical size, where many of the stewards were mobile, opportunities for steward-council officer contact were increased. The significant involvement of councillors in industrial relations was also related to the size of the authority. The political complexion of the councillors was important in prompting councillor involvement, but in a large authority, such as Dorset, regardless of political sympathies, councillors would have had great difficulty in becoming regularly involved in industrial relations processes. It was the proximity of decision-makers to stewards which helped them pursue the different aspects of their role.

Whilst accepting the influence of certain structural features upon management behaviour, it would be a mistake to ignore totally the undoubted discretion left to councillors and council officers in the manner in which they dealt with stewards. Councillor and council officer attitudes were important. The particular attitudes of Crawley's councillors were influential in creating an atmosphere conducive to steward activities and the creation of a unified steward organization. Note was made of the generous steward facilities and the union membership agreement. Furthermore,

councillor sympathies affected council officer action in dealing with stewards on a regular daily basis. The management recognition form for union stewards, for example, clearly identified steward activities to be pursued and union access to senior officers was partly related to officer awareness of councillor views. Yet it was also apparent that stewards themselves were prepared to take advantage of councillor and council officer sympathies and establish favourable conditions themsleves. Attention was drawn to the tendency for stewards to break procedure to meet with senior officers and their withdrawal from the Consultative Committee to gain a more direct route to councillors.

The trade union factors identified in the analytical framework had only a limited influence upon the development and operation of steward organization in Crawley. Full-time union officers were not significant figures, their involvement being restricted primarily to 'emergency situations' involving major disputes. Stewards were able to deal with most issues themselves, having established the necessary relationships with key decision-makers. In contrast to Birmingham and Dorset, management did not seek to involve full time officers in discussions of matters to the complete exclusion of stewards. This was in part related to the desire on the employer's side not to undermine steward effectiveness but was also a consequence of the greater representativeness of Crawley stewards. This greater representativeness was an inevitable consequence of the character of the Crawley workforce. In the previous case studies with complex workforces stewards were seen to represent very specific groups of workers, for instance, in a particular establishment or from a particular depot amongst many. In Crawley stewards were clearly more representative of major sections of the workforce. Thus, in a small and simplified workforce, the Leisure Centre steward was the only 'establishment steward', the refuse

and highway stewards the authority's only 'depot stewards'.

In Hackney, Dorset and Birmingham, branches were crucial in structuring patterns of steward interaction, whilst branch officers were very often the key figures in steward organization. In Crawley, both the NUPE and GMWU had established general branches rendering both these features inapplicable. The Crawley Council workers represented only very small proportions of their respective branches and branch officers were not themselves local government employees. Stewards rarely became involved in branch activities, or branch officers with Crawley Council issues. Branch structure, in failing to reinforce union groupings within the authority or to encourage the emergence of a union identy was, therefore, significant in facilitating the development of a unified steward organization.

Branch policy did, however, retain some influence upon workers and stewards where issues were clearly of significance beyond the authority alone. This was illustrated by the 1979 national dispute involving workers in the health service as well as local government. Where the policy of branches from different unions affected worker behaviour differently, consideration of the influence of branches upon steward organization overlapped with consideration of the influence of multi-unionism. Multi-unionism did not have a major divisive influence in Crawley. Distinct spheres of influence were enshrined in the UMA, restricting workers within specific departments or sections to membership of particular unions. This produced a reinforcement of occupational, functional and union groupings, but it did not seem to inhibit the emergence of a unified steward organization. Note was made of the successful development and operation of a joint shop stewards committee. Yet the failure of NUPE parks workers to take action in1979 was a useful reminder of the continuing influence

branches could still have upon workers even when excluded from the more regular operation of steward organization.

NOTES

1. The particular interest of the Chief Executive in industrial relations was further enhanced by the fact that he had been specifically responsible for it whilst Deputy Chief Executive and prior to the creation of a specialist personnel section.

2. It would still be a mistake to suggest that every conceivable avenue along which representation could have progressed had been explored. On the evidence of previous case studies, it has become apparent that stewards could emerge for the same entity or grouping, particularly where members were isolated and dispersed.

3. The additional steward had been appointed to take account of the dispersal of refuse workers throughout the authority during most of the working day, reinforcing, therefore, the observation made in the previous note.

4. Analysis of the JSSC was based on the minutes of 14 meetings between 1977 and 1981.

5. This average, as well as the general analysis of processes taking place within the JWC, was based upon 18 JWC meetings held between 1974 and 1978 plus one additional JWC observed during research.

6. A NALGO representative was also present at these JWC meetings strictly as an observer.

7. This significant steward involvement may appear to be similar to the kind of steward involvement identified by Terry. Thus management, seeking to make major changes in the organization of work, as a consequence of tightening financial controls were seen to involve stewards in Crawley. The crucial difference, however, with Terry's case studies was that in Crawley steward organization was already firmly established, its existence was neither in the balance nor solely dependent upon management's decision to include them within such processes.

8. There was again some evidence that the design of bonus schemes could influence the number of problems arising. Thus there appeared to be far fewer problems within the parks bonus scheme, negotiated at a later date, than with the highways and refuse schemes. The former scheme involved far less paper work; set levels of performance automatically rendered a fixed bonus.

9. These contacts between stewards and depot management could take the

form of organized meetings. One such meeting, for example, was held on 19th November 1980. It was primarily concerned with the re-negotiation of the highways bonus schemes, in which stewards discussed details with depot management.

10. It was interesting to note that the creation of a Management Services Section separate from the personnel section was also related to the political complexion of the council. Certainly a separate management services section is not found in Labour councils alone (a separate section existed in Conservative Dorset), but the Personnel Officer noted that councillor suspicions of bonus schemes lead to initial hesitation about the creation of such a section, and its creation at a much later date than the Personnel Section.

11. The two highways stewards, for example, had in the past had considerable contact with a Labour mayor of Crawley. They used to meet him regularly at lunchtime 'for a drink'.

12. This difficulty in dealing with the Labour councillors was confirmed with handling of the Highways bonus scheme. At the completion of research the re-negotiation of the highways bonus scheme had been completed. Shortly after, however, it appears that much of the highways work, which was carried out on an agency basis for West Sussex County Council, was handed back. The highways bonus re-negotiation, which produced a scheme highly beneficial for the workers was rendered worthless. Despite regular steward-councillor meetings during discussion on the scheme, this possibility had at no time been raised by councillors.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The four case studies have revealed the complexity and variation in the character of workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers. They have also provided a clear indication of the limited value of generalization when discussing any particular feature of this organization. For example, differences have been identified, both within and between authorities, in the shape of steward constituencies, the manner in which stewards have organized amongst themselves, and in the performance of the steward's role. In this final chapter an attempt is made to summarize and explain these differences and to provide some concluding remarks on the possibilities for future development of workplace organization in the highly volatile local government sector and on the value of adopting new approaches to the study of workplace organization throughout the economy.(1)

SUMMARY

Chapter 1 drew attention to the importance of the work group in the analysis of the origins of workplace organization. The steward was seen to emerge from within, and to represent the interests of, the 'self-regulating' work group which corresponded to or comprised a number of primary groups 'naturally' formed as industry brought men and women together. The study of the development of steward representation amongst local authority manual workers has pointed to some of the limitations of this approach. In particular, the research findings have cast doubt upon the universality of this process, upon the inevitability of primary or 'self-regulating' work group formation, and upon the emergence of the steward from and his responsibility solely to workers within these groups.

The character of steward representation varied significantly within the authorities, according to occupation, and between types of authority, according to differences in the occupational groups employed. Variations within authorities can be related to the diverse working conditions of the wide range of occupational groups. For example, the static establishment employees who work in close proximity with one another, can be contrasted with the smaller groups of mobile depot workers who return on a daily basis to the depot, and with the isolated and dispersed area or district office workers who return very infrequently to their particular offices.

These differences in working conditions influenced the potential for group formation, as well as the manner in which stewards could emerge from and relate to the workforce. Even so, what was most striking was that the 'work group' rarely formed the basis for steward constituencies. Representation was generally based upon one of the three mutually exclusive locations identified, regardless of the different groups of workers. Interaction between workers attached to area or district offices was so limited that primary or work group formation was simply inconceivable. In depots[2] and establishments, there were examples of more refined group-based constituencies, but these tended to be founded upon broad occupational, organizational or functional categories rather than upon the tightly knit work group. The complementary geographical units, which were seen to provide another basis for representation, were even further removed from the work group and again covered general aggregations of workers.

Where organization of work brings men and women together in groups, and where these groups then seek to regulate their terms and conditions of employment, the steward can readily be seen to emerge spontaneously from

the work group as its representative. In the absence of work group formation or activity for many local authority workers, the process by which stewards emerged is much more problematic.

It needs to be stressed from the outset that management played an indirect rather than a direct role in the process by which stewards emerged. No attempt was made to control the shape of steward constituencies or steward numbers. It was certainly apparent that many steward constituencies were based upon management-created entities and shaped by management functional and organizational criteria, but an understanding of the process also requires a consideration of union structures and practice.

The development of steward representatives amongst the full-time male depot workers was relatively unproblematical. These workers were often committed to union organization and were capable of organizing amongst themselves unassisted. Amongst the less able and willing part-time female workers in many establishments and area offices, such spontaneous organization was not forthcoming. In its absence, two distinct processes were identified by which stewards emerged. The first demanded some form of catalyst which would bring together workers who in the past might not have met and which would impress upon them the need for steward representation where previously they may have felt it to be unnecessary. The 1979 national dispute was an example of such a catalyst in Hackney and in Camden (Suddaby, 1979). In Hackney, workers who were normally dispersed and isolated, such as home helps and toilet attendants, were brought together at mass meetings and encouraged to recognise some form of common identity. If nothing else, they needed to develop a view on the dispute. More significant as catalysts, however, were individuals external to the group who encouraged the election of a steward. Various representative figures

acted in such a capacity. In Hackney and Birmingham senior stewards and branch officers were seen to stimulate representation amongst various groups of social service workers; a full-time union official in Birmingham amongst a number of school meals workers.(3)

The second process was characterized by the emergence of stewards as branch 'nominees'. Where workers were unable or unwilling to elect stewards, as was the case with many social service and education employees, it was often left to the branch secretary or chairman to appoint stewards. Stewards appointed in such a manner very often represented workers across large geographical areas and sometimes across the areas covered by the branch. Indeed, the contrasting importance of the 'authority steward' in Hackney and the 'district steward' in Dorset can partly be explained by a difference in branch structure.

The general observation that many situations in local authorities inhibited work group formation and activity, and restricted the importance of the work group as a basis of representation, was accompanied by an emphasis on the significant variation which can exist between different occupational groups in the character of representation. The implication is that patterns of representation are liable to vary between authority types, depending on the kind of occupational groups employed to provide the requisite services. The case studies provided ample evidence of such variation in patterns of representation between different types of authority.

Crawley, a non-metropolitan district council, performed relatively few functions and employed a mainly full-time male workforce in depots. Although representation had developed in a comprehensive manner, the steward

body remained small and relatively homogeneous. Birmingham City had the largest and the most occupationally diverse steward body considered. These features were significantly related to the wide range of functions performed by a metropolitan district council and the consequent need to employ a wide range of occupational groups. Provision of both education and social services produced a significant number of 'establishment stewards', whilst responsibility for refuse collection, highways and sewage also encouraged the emergence of many 'depot stewards'. The only other authority type performing such a wide range of functions and with the potential to produce a similarly diversified steward body is an outer London Borough. Hackney, an Inner London Borough, was not responsible for education and this limited the number of 'establishment stewards' to be found. Nevertheless, Hackney still had an extremely diversified, if numerically smaller, steward body because it covered most of the functions provided by Birmingham.

The major functions performed by Dorset requiring manual workers were education and social services. The performance of these functions by a non-metropolitan county, to the exclusion of others which are likely to employ full-time male workers, produces a predominantly part-time female workforce and, in Dorset, reliance upon stewards covering variously defined geographical area. Dorset's steward body was not outstandingly diversified but it was made up of stewards with vaguely defined and broadly based constituencies.

The employment of the same range of occupational groups to perform a given set of functions does not produce identical patterns of representation within the same types of authority(4). The influence of different outside agencies, which was seen to be so important in stimulating representation, may vary with the same authority type. For example, the impact

of the 1979 national dispute on representation in Hackney was closely related to the way action was organized in that authority. It should not, of course, be assumed that the dispute was conducted in similar fashion in all London Boroughs. Furthermore, the emergence of so many 'establishment stewards' in Birmingham was traced in part to service-specific branches able to devote a considerable volume of resources to developing representation in particular sections of the workforce. Branches of this kind were not invariably, or indeed usually, found in metropolitan districts.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the potential development of steward representation is tied very closely to authority type. Functions performed establish fairly firm limits upon such development. Thus, given the limited range of services provided by non-metropolitan districts and metropolitan counties, it is inconceivable that a highly diversified steward body could be created. In metropolitan districts, inner and outer London Boroughs, the likelihood of diversified steward bodies developing was very much in evidence.

Consideration of steward organization focused upon the different locations and entities within which stewards interacted. More specifically, an attempt was made to ascertain whether unified steward organizations could be identified which embraced the whole of the manual workforce at the authority level. Although Terry (1982) had identified interesting contrasts in the character of steward organization within the same type of authority, the research findings suggested that the structure of different authority types produced fundamental differences in such organizations and, in particular, influenced the likelihood of steward unity or fragmentation.

Stewards did not organize to any great extent in the three mutually exclusive entities distinguished, that is, the establishment, depot or area office. It was rare for more than one steward to emerge from establishments or area offices and, although there was evidence of informal interaction between stewards in certain depots and even joint meetings with management to discuss facilities and equipment, depot-based steward organization was not of widespread significance. Two forms of fragmentation were, however, identified: one divided steward organization vertically and the other horizontally. 'Vertical fragmentation' was characterized by interaction amongst stewards at the level of the authority who were from specific occupational, functional or organisational groups. 'Horizontal fragmentation' was reflected in interaction between stewards from a wide range of occupational, functional or organizational groups who were confined to specific geographical areas of the authority.

The four case studies illustrated the distinctiveness of patterns of steward interaction within different types of authority. The steward organizations in Crawley and Hackney were generally characterised as 'unified', although there were some significant differences between the two which were to affect their operation. Crawley was the only authority in which steward interaction took place solely within 'open' bodies such as the Joint Works Committee and the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. In Hackney patterns of interaction were far more complex. Occupational, functional and organizational groups of stewards met with some regularity, but this did not inhibit unified and integrated interaction within the 'open' bodies. Birmingham and Dorset provided examples of the two ways in which steward organizations could fragment. In Birmingham stewards representing specific occupational and functional groups of workers from throughout the authority met alone, whilst in Dorset the key basis for interaction was the district within the authority.

The three structural features of authorities distinguished in the analytical framework appeared to have a significant influence upon the potential for organization amongst stewards. The size and the diversity of the different steward bodies was inextricably linked with the range of functions performed by the authority as well as with the size of the area and of the population to be serviced. The size and diversity of the steward body was to have a significant impact upon patterns of steward organization. For example, the occupational homogeneity and small size of the steward body in Crawley facilitated unity within 'open' structures; whilst in Birmingham the heterogeneity and sheer size of the steward body inhibited such 'open' contact and encouraged fragmentation along group lines.

Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that opportunities for steward interaction were not solely dependent upon the size and diversity of the steward body. For instance, it was interesting to note that Hackney had a larger and occupationally more diversified steward body than Dorset and yet a far more unified steward organization. Clearly some consideration had to be given to the size of the authority across which stewards were dispersed and the ease with which they could move around it.

The geographical dimension to the employment context was a factor of some significance in explaining the development of steward organization in all authorities studied. The scattering of stewards across any given geographical area influenced the possibilities for both formal and informal interaction. Even in the most favourable conditions, with ease of movement over a small area, the sheer physical effort needed to travel still served to restrict attendance levels at many formal meetings. More significant, perhaps, were the major difficulties faced in developing the kind of

informal 'networks of contact' distinguished by Batstone et al (1977). Informal interaction between individual stewards from either the same occupational group or different occupational groups was rare, with most informal interaction revolving around those involved in formal bodies. Where patterns of informal interaction were identified, the studies provided confirmation of the importance of a 'key figure' (Terry, 1982) in maintaining linkages with stewards, although it appeared important to distinguish between whether this figure was a steward, branch officer or full-time union official.

In addition to these general geographical restrictions upon steward interaction, it was nevertheless apparent that differences in the size of authorities and their urban-rural make-up produced certain variations between steward organizations. Although these two features are less closely linked with authority type than functions performed, it still remains possible to draw some tentative generalizations based upon the case studies.

It was clear that two structural features, a large geographical area and one that was highly ruralized, combined to severely restrict steward mobility and the possibility of authority-wide interaction. These features are most likely to co-exist in the non-metropolitan county and the inhibitive effect they had upon the development of unified and integrated steward organization was fully apparent in Dorset. The long distances needed to travel to a central point in the county rendered it impracticable for either management or the unions to establish many structures covering the whole of the authority. Furthermore, given the geographical fragmentation of steward organization which resulted, it was very difficult for any single lay representative to become the 'key figure' in an informal network of contact. Union full-time officials, the only representatives

who could claim authority-wide responsibilities, tended almost by default to assume this 'key' role.

Geographical size appears to be less significant in inhibiting the development of unified steward organization in the lower-tier authorities. The size and relative ease of movement combined to make Hackney the most compact of the authority types studied with stewards and workers from throughout the authority meeting with some regularity[5]. The metropolitan district is constructed in not too dissimilar a fashion and with authority level interaction common in Birmingham, one of the largest of this type of authority, it should certainly be viewed as possible and even likely in others of this kind. Some care is, however, needed in generalizing about non-metropolitan districts for although many remain small, as with Crawley, difficulties faced in moving around highly ruralized areas of any size may still inhibit authority-wide organization.

The dispersal of stewards across authorities severely inhibited the development of spontaneous and independent steward organization. It is not being suggested that as a consequence steward organization amongst local authority manual workers necessarily has to be sponsored, although this is a possibility that needs to be explored in some authorities. What is being suggested, however, is that in the absence of informal 'networks of contact', which might have encouraged the development of more self-reliant organization, formal bodies created by either management or the trade unions become crucial as forums within which stewards could interact.

It is not possible to dissociate mangement and union behaviour from the structural features of authorities (Greenwood et al, 1980:166) and in the concluding section of this chapter an attempt is made to assess just how powerful a constraint they are upon such behaviour. Nonetheless, the case studies revealed that certain management and union variables did have a relatively independent influence upon steward organization. Assessment of the encouragement or opposition provided by management to steward organization needed to unravel the relationship between councillors and council officers. It was generally apparent that councillor involvement in detailed day-to-day industrial relations was very limited. Councillor-council officer contact on an ad hoc basis was rare and confined, in the personnel sphere, to senior council officers and chairmen or vice-chairmen of committees. Even so, councillors were still seen to influence steward organization in two ways. Firstly, and most directly, they could exert influence through policy decisions; and secondly, and less tangibly, their attitudes formed a backcloth which influenced council officer behaviour vis à vis steward organization.

Policies were found to differ to some degree according to the party political complexion of the council. Many of these were differences that might have been expected. For example, the granting of a union membership agreement was clearly related to Labour Party control. Facilities and time-off provisions, which are perhaps more significant in encouraging steward interaction, also appeared more generous in Labour authorities. The size of the sample of authorities and the variation in their political complexion was not great enough to allow the establishment of a definite link between political complexion and council policies towards manual employees. This is, however, a relationship which would lend itself fairly

easily to further confirmation through more extensive survey work.

The character of the backcloth formed by councillors' attitudes would perhaps be less susceptible to this type of analysis, involving an assessment not only of councillor attitudes but the influence of these attitudes upon council officer behaviour. As with policies, it was possible to discern patterns based on a very crude party political dichotomy. Labour councillors were generally sympathetic to the aims and activities of stewards and these were views which council officers could not afford to ignore. Officers were certainly aware of a degree of informal contact between some councillors and union officials and in a number of the authorities studied, this kind of contact had become formalized in joint bodies. There also appeared to be a greater willingness on the part of Labour councillors to become involved in industrial relations, especially in industrial disputes. It was this awareness of councillor views that may in part help to account for the tolerance of Crawley and Hackney officers towards stewards occasionally breaking formal grievance and disputes procedures. The reverse side of the coin was a tendency for certain Labour councillors to take rather a 'paternalistic' attitude toward their employees, regarding opposition as 'biting the hand that feeds you'[6].

Conservative councillors, in contrast, may have been less sympathetic to steward aims and activities, but they were also far less willing to become involved in industrial relations. The attitude of many Conservative councillors in authorities studied was summed up by the phrase, "We pay officers to do a job; let them get on with it". Such an approach left council officers with considerable freedom and independence in their dealing with stewards.

In the general absence of councillor involvement in detailed day-to-day industrial relations, council officer attitudes and behaviour were an important influence upon steward organization in their own right. The case studies provided confirmation of the important role council officers could play in establishing 'key stewards' (Terry 1982), but called into question their dependence upon management. Stewards acting in a de facto rather than a de jure full-time capacity were the norm in the authorities observed[7] and although the activities of these figures were based upon management consent, the degree of enthusiasm with which they were supported varied.

Active management encouragement was most apparent in Birmingham. Here the TGWU Branch Secretary was effectively full-time on union work and the two senior parks representatives were placed in jobs which allowed them to devote considerable time to union work. Further management encouragement was apparent in the attempts being made by the Social Service Department to gain more time off work for the NUPE Social Service Branch Secretary. In Hackney and Crawley 'key stewards' tended to perform with tacit rather than active management encouragement. Certainly they were given considerable freedom to carry out their union work, but there was evidence to suggest that they were to some degree able to develop their roles independently of management. For example, the nature of certain work tasks necessitated worker mobility which could be used to maintain contact with fellow stewards and workers. The opportunity for such activity was further enhanced by the absence of tight managerial supervision over these mobile workers.

A clearer impression of council officer influence upon the steward organization is gained when attention turns to the second of the management factors distinguished in the analytical framework: that is, the expression of management attitudes through the provision of bargaining and consultative machinery. Although the establishment of a set of joint committees necessitated a decision by the council, specialized personnel officers seemed to be in the forefront in stimulating their emergence. Various factors appear to have prompted council officers to act in such a way. Certain links between the establishment of joint committees and a broadening in the scope for bargaining and consultation through the introduction of bonus schemes can be identified. The Code of Guiding Principles for Work Study Based Incentive Schemes (Appendix 2) recommended the creation of local 'joint pay and productivity/efficiency committees' and in certain authorities these were the first type of joint committee created[8]. In Dorset, for example, the Weymouth College JCC, a prototype for the departmental JCCs, was created to monitor the college bonus schemes, and management-roadmen representatives met regularly to consider bonus issues. Even so, it was also apparent that where joint bodies were established, this was not done solely for those workers with bonus schemes but for all groups of manual workers as part of a general management strategy.

There was perhaps a stronger link between the establishment of joint committees and the reorganization of local government in 1974. The need to develop the personnel function as a consequence of the upheaval caused by reorganization, together with the encouragement provided by the Bains Report, appeared to stimulate officer activity in this direction. The establishment of joint bodies took a number of years, but in both Birmingham and Dorset the initial impetus can be traced back to the 1974-75 period.

The number of stewards participating in joint committees should not be exaggerated. With the exception of Crawley, steward involvement in these bodies was limited to a fairly small proportion of the total steward bodies. Nevertheless, it was clear that many of these committees had the potential to allow considerable interaction, and that amongst certain groups, stewards had been prepared to fulfil this potential. The coverage of the bodies and the distribution of seats upon them were particularly significant in determining the character of this form of interaction.

It was a general characteristic of all the joint bodies analysed that they facilitated interaction between stewards from different unions where multi-unionism existed. This was significant in encouraging a breakdown of union allegiance through the need for inter-union cooperation in pursuing worker issues. Yet the manner in which seats were distributed amongst the unions had an important effect upon the opportunities for steward involvement. Seats were distributed by management either proportionate to union membership or, more commonly, on a numerically equal basis regardless of membership levels. The Birmingham Social Service JCC provided an example of distribution according to the former method. In both Dorset and Hackney seats were divided in a numerically equal manner, despite NUPE dominance amongst the relevant groups of workers. The result was that on a number of committees other unions were unable to find stewards to participate, whilst willing NUPE stewards were barred from involvement.

Although interaction between stewards from different unions was encouraged, the overwhelming majority of joint bodies also fostered

fragmentation along occupational, sectional and departmental lines. Most joint committees were based upon these distinctions and were therefore only open to the specific groups covered by them. The existence of this type of body could clearly be justified on a number of grounds: many issues arising were of concern to particular groups of workers and these were issues which could be dealt with only by departmental line or staff management. Nevertheless, where specific groups of stewards met in narrowly-based bodies, their attention tended to focus upon parochial interests. This possibility was to some extent countered by the existence of 'open' joint committees which both reflected and encouraged a unified steward outlook. In Hackney and Crawley Joint Works Committees operated to stimulate the adoption of broader perspectives because representatives of the manual workforce met within the same body. In Dorset, the geographical fragmentation of steward organization prevented the effective operation of the 'open' JCC and in Birmingham such a body simply did not exist.

The character of union branch structure in the authorities studied had a crucial influence upon the nature of steward organization. It was through branch structures that most stewards were integrated into the authority's steward organization. The proportion of the steward body involved in branch-related institutional machinery was far greater than that involved in the joint committees with their fixed delegations. It was not so much the full branch meetings which provided the forum for steward interaction but branch and steward committees which were very often open to all branch stewards.

It is important to recognize that branch structure was closely inter-related with two of the other trade union factors distinguished in the analytical framework: national policy and full-time union officer behaviour. National policy-makers sought to shape local union institutions with full-time officers very often acting as their agents. NUPE's national policy of creating a network of district branches, for example, was seen to necessitate considerable reorganization at the local level, much of it effected by the relevant full-time officer.

Branches were classified according to their 'authority orientation' and three features were used to determine the degree of such orientation: first, the geographical coverage of the branch, that is whether it covered the whole or just part of the authority; second, the membership composition, whether members were only employed by the authority or whether they came from different authorities or industries; thirdly, whether the branch officers were employed by the authority.

The degree of 'authority orientation' displayed by branches in the four case studies had a very significant effect upon the patterns of formal and informal interaction and upon the character of issues discussed and articulated through branch structures. The high level of branch 'authority orientation' in Hackney greatly encouraged the unity of steward organization and allowed interaction between stewards from throughout the manual workforce. It also enabled broad issues of concern to be discussed and enhanced the role of the Branch Secretary who was able to act as a lynchpin in the organization and an authoritative representative in dealings with management. In the other three authorities branches were far less 'authority orientated' and this contributed to a fragmentation of steward

organization. Although the very absence of involvement with branch officers and structures may have facilitated multi-union organization in Crawley, it was also clear that steward and worker responsibility to branches covering a wide range of industries could undermine active pursuit of authority objectives. More significantly, in Birmingham the service-based branches dovetailed into joint committees and institutionally reinforced the occupational diversity of the workforce; while in Dorset not only were branches based upon districts within the authority, institutionally reinforcing the geographical dispersal of the workforce, but county stewards were forced to mix with stewards from other authorities and industries so undermining and diluting a county perspective.

The importance of branch committees as forums within which stewards could interact raised the possibility of fragmentation of steward organization along union lines in multi-union authorities. It has already been noted that inter-union interaction in joint union-management bodies lessened the likelihood of such fragmentation. The existence of multi-union steward committees covering the whole of the authority also appeared to contribute to inter-union cooperation. In all, four case study authorities multi-union committees were identified. The character of these committees, however, varied significantly, influencing the degree of encouragement they could provide for the creation of a unified authority organization. It is important to distinguish between the relatively 'open' and effective joint shop steward committees of Hackney and Crawley and the committees in Birmingham and Dorset which saw little steward involvement and which are best regarded as 'joint full-time officer committees'.

Just as the dispersal and isolation of certain workers necessitated a catalyst to bring them together and impress upon them the need for a steward, so the geographical scattering of stewards across the authority required a catalyst to encourage them to form a joint union or steward committee. The late development of joint steward committees amongst local authority workers can partly be related to the absence of catalysts. More recently, however, industrial action and the threat of 'cuts' have stimulated the formation of such committees. There was some evidence to suggest that during the national dispute of 1970 joint union strike committees were emerging in many authorities, but steward representation and organization were not developed enough to sustain them after the dispute. The 1979 action was more effective in establishing durable committees. This was certainly the case in Hackney where the JSSC was a direct response to the need for coordination during the dispute, later broadening out to concern itself with a wide range of issues. The threat of 'cuts' had a somewhat ambiguous effect on steward unity as will become apparent in the concluding section, nonetheless in Dorset and Birmingham it was this threat which prompted the establishment of joint committees.

Consideration of steward organization focused primarily upon patterns of steward interaction, but although the character of such interaction had an important influence upon the shape of organization, an understanding of the degree of unity or fragmentation achieved was also significantly dependent upon how stewards acted when they met.

In the introductory chapters two interrelated themes associated with the role of the steward were drawn from past research. The first noted the influence of changes in the scope for bargaining upon the steward's

role; the second stressed the significance of direct management encouragement or 'sponsorship' in the more recent development of this role. Attempts had been made to link these two themes in the local authority context (Terry 1982) with the emergence of stewards being related to a broadening in the scope for bargaining, particularly through the introduction of bonus schemes which were designed to facilitate the achievement of certain management objectives.

The case studies confirmed the major impact of bonus schemes upon the role of certain stewards and it appeared that management had far greater freedom in exerting an influence upon steward activities than was the case with their influence over patterns of steward interaction. Nevertheless, the picture presented was rather more complex than previously suggested and indicated the need for a general reappraisal of the association between the two themes. More specifically, it was apparent that the simple relationship between the role of the steward and a broadening in the scope for bargaining to achieve particular management objectives needed to be qualified in a number of respects.

The local authority manual steward was generally involved in very little bargaining activity, dealing mainly with individual member problems and the communication of information. The 'tightness' of national agreements significantly limited the scope for local bargaining. Even on issues open to local discussion, the very limited decision-making authority of lower line management, and the tendency for issues to pass rapidly into formal joint machinery, severely inhibited the effectivensss of stewards. Nevertheless, there were important marginal differences in the performance

of the steward's role which were seen to be closely related to the type of worker represented. This variation stemmed primarily from major differences in occupational working conditions and tasks. These differences affected the range and type of issue discussed as well as the steward's ability to deal with them. Occupation did not determine the role played by the steward, but it established limits to or the potential scope for steward activities.

An understanding of the variation in the performance of the steward's role must partly be related to the manner in which occupational working conditions and tasks influenced the ease with which stewards were originally elected. The same factors which contributed to the early emergence of stewards amongst certain groups of workers facilitated the performance of the steward's role, whilst factors inhibiting the election of stewards amongst other groups hindered steward activities. For example, the frequency of contact between full-time male depot workers which enabled the relatively independent and spontaneous emergence of stewards also ensured that the steward was able to maintain a close relationship with members, be receptive to their problems and able to communicate with them. In contrast, the isolation and dispersal of education and social service workers in small establishments or attached to area offices which necessitated an external catalyst to produce a steward, subsequently presented the steward with major problems in carrying out his or her role. The imposition of a steward did not, of course, guarantee effective performance of the role and there was evidence to suggest that members had great difficulty presenting problems to stewards, while unenthusiastic stewards remained concerned solely with passing on information.

The geographical dimension to the local authority employment context, and the fact that many workers carried out their work tasks over large areas, raised the problem of steward-member contact and necessitated considerable efforts on the part of the steward to maintain the constituency as a viable and meaningful unit. It was interesting to note the different mechanisms adopted by stewards to achieve this end. Two methods were distinguished: 'mobility' or 'access to mobility', with the steward or somebody acting on the steward's behalf travelling to members; and 'predictable accessibility', with members knowing where to contact their steward at a given time. Yet despite the generality of the problem, it was apparent that where members were dispersed and isolated, constituency maintenance could be very difficult and examples were found of stewards who had failed in their task.(9)

Further evidence of the association between the role of the steward and the occupational group represented was provided by the emergence of many 'occupation-specific' issues which provided varying opportunities for bargaining and problem resolution. A number of examples of this kind of issue can be cited. For stewards representing depot workers, the facilities provided in depots, such as washing facilities, lockers and heating, were a major source of grievance. Caretakers had some scope to bargain locally on letting agreements, as did highway workers on winter gritting. Locally negotiable additional payments were also tied closely with occupation as with the 'dirty payment' for housing estate cleaners. Perhaps most significant was the considerable variation in the extent to which work measurement and the introduction of bonus schemes was possible.

The differential impact of bonus schemes on part-time female workers and full-time male workers was indicated in Table 2.2. It could be argued that it was not so much working conditions but industrial muscle which influenced the order with which schemes were introduced. Contrary to the suggestion that bonus schemes were designed solely to achieve management objectives, it was clear that many workers saw early bonus schemes as a means of increasing earnings. Indeed, the case studies provided a number of examples of workers seeking to pressure management into introducing schemes through industrial action. As already mentioned, it was no coincidence that the more powerful groups, such as refuse collectors, were the first to receive schemes. Yet, whilst this argument retains a grain of truth[10], it was certainly far easier to introduce schemes for full-time workers occupations. Of particular significance in this respect was the ease with which time and performance could be related. Thus, although there was no great difficulty in measuring refuse collector output in terms of bins collected, the output of home helps and residential homes workers was less easily quantified.

As implied immediately above, a further important link between the steward's role and the occupational group represented concerns the differential bargaining power held by workers and differences in the ability of stewards to mobilize this power in support of their activities. The analytical framework developed by Hill (1974) to study work group formation and activity is clearly of some value in seeking to explain the differential bargaining power of occupational groups. For example, the 'structural conditions' of refuse collector work allowed regular interaction between workers. They were able to develop 'forms of consciousness' which accepted the use and value of industrial action, while the nature of their

work gave them considerable disruptive power. In contrast, the very limited power of groups like parks workers severely limited a vigorous and effective pursuit of interests. Amongst other groups the situation was more complex. Such groups as school caretakers, gravediggers and social service workers clearly had some bargaining power, especially given the political sensitivity of their employers, but they were generally reluctant to use it. An understanding of this reluctance must be related to the 'nature' and 'extent of worker consciousness', as well as to the 'structural conditions' of work which may have presented major practical difficulties to action.

In focusing upon the close relationship between the steward's role and the occupational group, attention is naturally directed towards the handling of individual and sectional issues rather than issues of concern to the total manual workforce. A number of issues of relevance to the total manual workforce were identified in the case studies. They included such issues as union membership agreements, service supplements or other plus rates across the workforce, changes in holiday arrangements, disputes and grievance procedures, protective clothing schedules, health and safety issues, principles for the implementation of bonus schemes, and steward facilities.

It needs to be stressed that the number of stewards involved in the handling of these issues in any given authority was extremely limited: they emerged only occasionally and would be discussed in formal committees or on an ad hoc basis with very few lay representatives present. Nevertheless, there were interesting differences between authorities in the likelihood of such issues arising and in their handling. For example, in Dorset

issues of broad concern generated by the stewards rarely came up for discussion, whereas in other authorities, such as Birmingham, issues of this kind were discussed, but rarely with steward involvement. Examples were also found of authorities in which such issues were relatively common and discussed with some steward participation. Such was the case in Hackney and Crawley. As previously noted, unified steward organizations were more likely to generate issues of broad concern than fragmented organizations, although the discussion below will suggest that management policy was also of particular importance.

As in the analysis of steward representation, the establishment of a close link between the steward's role and the occupational group represented suggests a relationship between steward activities and functions performed. For example, in the non-metropolitan district, with a workforce composed primarily of full-time males in occupations lending themselves to the application of bonus schemes, the scope for steward bargaining and problem-resolution is likely to be fairly wide. In non-metropolitan counties, with large numbers of part-time social service and education workers, the willingness and ability of stewards to embark on a wide range of activities may be less apparent.

The pattern of industrial action within different types of authority is also likely to vary as a consequence of the employment of different occupational groups. The sample of authorities was again too small to establish a firm relationship between authority type and patterns of industrial action. Even so, it is possible to speculate that the level of industrial activity is likely to be higher in those authorities employing powerful occupational groups such as refuse collectors. This

higher level of activity may well stem not solely from pursuit of parochial demands, but also from the willingness of such groups to act as the vanguard for the total manual workforce.

The character of industrial action is also related to the geographical size and ease of movement around the authority. The coordination and unity demanded for the successful execution of industrial action is more likely to be achieved in compact authorities. It was interesting to note that the clearest example of coordinated action was in Hackney which employed one of the widest range of occupational groups. Yet the authority was small enough to allow action to be effectively coordinated by a strike committee, and to permit continual mass meetings of the workforce and stewards to encourage the development of a unified and common approach. By contrast, the barriers to mounting unified action in a large rural authority such as Dorset, even amongst a single occupational group like school meal workers, were very high.

A more specific influence of authority size upon the steward's role was related to the ease with which the steward could move around the authority to contact senior levels of management. The limited decision-making authority of lower line management geographically distanced the steward from more effective management levels. There was evidence to suggest that in the smaller, more compact authorities, such as Hackney and Crawley, the possibility of physical contact with senior council officers, despite formal disputes procedure, enabled the development of relationships and facilitated steward and branch officer activities. In Dorset this kind of contact was far less of a possibility and so significantly reduced the steward's ability to deal with issues quickly and effectively.

of personnel in Crawley, which conformed to the shire district model, gave stewards considerable scope to act. They could direct their attention to one central personnel section and, with this section part of the Chief Executive's Department, could hope to act with considerable effectiveness.

In contrast, the organization of personnel in Dorset was not typical of shire counties in general. The designated departmental personnel officers commonly found in shire counties, according to Hinnings and Walsh, were not found in Dorset. The centralization of personnel in an independent department in Dorset, combined with strongly held personnel officer attitudes and practices, served to restrict the ability of stewards to pursue their roles. Indeed, communication of union and management information rather than bargaining or problem-resolution was the major steward task.

Whether generalization can be made on the basis of the Birmingham case study on the influence of departmental personnel officers on the steward's role is debatable. According to Hinnings and Walsh, the 'attempt at explicit decentralization (of personnel), whilst still maintaining strong central control', which characterized the organization of personnel in Birmingham, is 'rare'. 'It is more common for there to be a rather more confused pattern of decentralisation' (p.22). Certainly, the existence in Birmingham of departmental personnel officers with clearly defined functions and quite senior in the management hierarchy, provided an identifiable and effective point of contact for stewards, enhancing their ability to resolve problems. Yet the very strong central personnel department limited decisive bargaining on departmental issues and especially on

Management structure or, more specifically, the organization of the personnel function within authorities, appeared to have a significant effect upon the steward's role. The case studies confirmed the variation in the organization of personnel noted by Hinnings and Walsh. Authorities were identified where personnel was a section of the Chief Executive's Department and where it was an independent department. It was also clear that in certain authorities individual service departments had designated personnel officers whilst others did not. Furthermore, it was fully apparent that personnel could be handled by a full council committee, an independent sub-committee or by a general committee.

Although Hinnings and Walsh relate their findings on the organization of the personnel function to authority type, it is not possible to distinguish a clearcut relationship between the character of personnel and type of authority. There is, however, one exception to this observation and that is the organization of personnel in non-metropolitan or shire districts. Personnel was more likely to be a section of the Chief Executive's Department in the shire districts studied by Hinnings and Walsh than in any other type of authority and even more clearly shire districts were much less likely to have designated departmental personnel officers than other authority types. Indeed, Hinnings and Walsh are prepared to state that, 'It is large authorities which decentralize the function; small authorities, if they operate, do so centrally' (p.21).

Differences in the organization of the personnel function influenced the degree to which stewards could pursue the different aspects of their role. The distinctive structure of the personnel function in shire districts was particularly interesting in this respect. The organization

issues of authority-wide concern. In a more 'confused' situation, where personnel tasks fall almost by default to officers 'low in the hierarchy and therefore not authoritative' (p.22), the effectiveness of stewards in resolving problems may be more limited.

As already implied, steward access to personnel and senior line officers was an important influence upon role performance. In some authorities stewards had scope to force a degree of access, partly related to the backcloth of sympathetic councillor views. Even so, such access was far more dependent upon council officer attitudes and particularly officer conceptions of how representative stewards were and the specific role they thought stewards should play.

Batstone et al (1977) have noted that, 'strong bargaining relationships are sought by management where conveners and stewards tend to be both willing and able to lead their members' (p.177). In the absence of a wide scope for local bargaining, the need for 'strong bargaining relationships' may not have been great, but it remains fair to suggest that local authority management were more likely to develop relationships with those stewards who were effectively associated with their members than those who were not. Accepting some differences in the relationships between council officers and stewards from various occupational groups, it was a fairly generally held view amongst council officers in the authorities studied that many of their manual stewards were limited both in their effectiveness and their representativeness. The analysis of patterns of representation lends some support to such a view. It was freely admitted by union officers that the rapid increase in numbers of stewards was often at the expense of their quality in terms both of their commitment and ability. Furthermore,

whilst certain steward types representing only very small groups of workers in, for example, an establishment had great difficulty in perceiving issues other than in a parochial way, other steward types were only very loosely related to members scattered over wide areas.

This officer conception of stewards had a number of interrelated consequences which served to limit steward activities. First, officers might have a narrow view of the steward's role; secondly, this conception could lead to limited steward access to decision-making levels of management; and finally it could result in officers looking elsewhere for representative union figures to deal with. Whether this alternative figure was a member of the authority's workplace organization partly reflected the unity or fragmentation of that organization. In Hackney lay representatives were able to act with authority-wide effect; in Birmingham lay union representatives were able to deal with many authority-wide issues affecting specific occupational groups, but on issues of broader concern, management dealt with full-time union officials; in Dorset, the absence of authority level lay representatives led to management reliance solely upon full-time union officials.

The influence on steward activities of the introduction of bonus schemes, which is a more specific manifestation of management attitudes, needs to be treated with care. Those writers who have previously related the introduction of bonus schemes to an expansion of the steward's role have tended to overlook the differing impact schemes have had upon steward behaviour. In the case study authorities bonus schemes were generally seen to enhance the problem-resolution function of certain stewards. Problems stemmed from a marked lack of understanding about the operation of schemes

amongst workers, and even within lower line management, as well as from the considerable amount of associated paperwork. However, the exact nature of the problems, and more especially the scope for steward bargaining, were very much dependent upon the procedures adopted to introduce and service schemes and upon the scheme's design.

Despite the existence of National Code of Guiding Principles, both the procedures related to schemes and their design varied in significant respects. The coverage of schemes placed some practical limit on the degree to which stewards could become involved in the initial negotiation of schemes. Schemes covering small groups of workers could often involve the few stewards who represented these workers, whilst a more select negotiating team had to be chosen where the scheme covered larger and well-represented groups of workers. Even so, management still retained a considerable degree of discretion as to how far they involved stewards. The work study exercise, for example, could be relatively open to stewards as in Crawley, with considerable consultation between work study officers and stewards and a free flow of information between them, or it could be relatively closed, as for parks workers in Birmingham, with full-time union officers alone participating in detailed discussions. In servicing schemes, management also had the option of creating forums within which stewards could bring bonus issues for discussions, as happened in Birmingham and Dorset.

The design of bonus schemes was perhaps of more fundamental importance to the subsequent involvement of stewards in the servicing of schemes, for this contributed significantly to the likely volume and

type of issue generated. The relationship between the design of schemes and issues generated is clearly an area which could provide fruitful grounds for further research. What can tentatively be suggested on the basis of this study is that bonus schemes based more upon a 'measured day work principle', providing a fixed bonus for a given level of work, appeared to give less scope for bargaining and fewer substantive problems than schemes based upon tightly-defined time values for specific tasks and therefore providing variable bonus earnings.

The provision of joint union-management committees, a further manifestation of management attitudes, also provided an opportunity for stewards to develop their role. The number of representatives as a proportion of an authority's steward body involved in these committees was not great, but those participating were generally pursuing the different aspects of their role with significant vigour and in some cases with more effect than elsewhere. Collective issues tended to be passed very rapidly into these bodies and, with issues affecting individual workers often constitutionally excluded, discussions usually focused exclusively upon them. Certainly most of the committees analysed were dominated by employee-generated issues.

Accepting these general observations, there were nevertheless some interesting differences, in the operation of these bodies both within and between authorities. The differences within authorities primarily related to the workers covered by the committees and can be understood by reference to earlier discussion in this chapter. Thus, the flow, volume and range of issues filtering through to committees from workers was associated with the closeness of the relationship between steward and members; while steward

independence or dependence upon full-time union officials or branch officers during committee proceedings was related to steward confidence and experience. Differences between authorities also revolved around the structure of committees, but more particularly around the composition of the management side.

The most fundamental difference in steward activities within joint bodies stemmed from the degree of councillor involvement. Councillors had the ultimate decision-making power and it was clear that fairly senior councillors, able to exert that power, were participating in certain of these bodies. Steward desire to meet directly with councillors was reflected in the importance attached by Hackney stewards to the Joint Works Committee in pursuing their ends and by the desire of Crawley stewards to by-pass an intermediary union-council officer committee to achieve more immediate contact with them. The level of bargaining taking place in the union-councillor bodies of Hackney and Crawley should not be exaggerated, but certainly the possibility of meeting with senior councillors allowed authoritative decisions to be made and at least encouraged stewards to raise and pursue requests for changes in terms and conditions of employment. A further significant consequence of such meetings was the possibility for stewards to bring council officers to account, a possibility which had an important, if less tangible, effect on daily officer-steward relations. For stewards in Birmingham and Dorset, activities of this kind were effectively excluded.

Care must be taken in seeking to generalize the findings from the case study authorities on the operation of joint committees, for both authorities were Labour controlled. It was not a distinctive feature of

Labour controlled councils that they met on a formal basis with manual worker representatives[11], but whether stewards would have been as keen to meet directly with councillors, as willing to raise requests, or able to bring council officers to account in Conservative authorities, is open to greater debate. Any attempt to speculate should not, however, simplistically equate Labour councillors with sympathy for manual workers and Conservative councillors with antipathy or hostility. The relationship was far more complex. As has been continually suggested, stewards in many instances disliked dealing with Labour councillors who were apt to take a 'paternalistic' view and argue that they 'knew what was best' for their workers. They also disliked Labour councillors who were very often prepared to 'fudge' issues, for fear of being accused of 'deserting party colours'. It is very likely that stewards would still be very anxious to have direct contact with councillors in Conservative-controlled councils, in the hope that they would receive firm, definite and perhaps even 'straighter' answers, than in Labour authorities.

It would be a mistake to view steward activities as being solely reactive to management policy. In Dorset, for example, it was noted that stewards were seeking to develop their activities by encouraging membership action in pursuit of bonus schemes; whilst in Crawley stewards were attempting to increase their effectiveness through by-passing a union-council officer committee in order to achieve a more direct route to councillors. This provides a useful reminder that just as management had the right to create joint committees, so stewards retained the right not to participate in them. Nevertheless, what was perhaps more interesting was the manner in which trade union structure and policy, rather than encouraging the development of the steward's role, appeared to have prompted the emergence of stewards who were relatively inactive.

The attempt by union officers to stimulate steward representation was a response to the employment characteristics of particular workers. The result was often the encouragement of stewards whose commitment to the post and whose ability to fulfil the different tasks related to it were questionable. There were, of course, very important occupational differences but many of the more recent stewards, especially those representing social service and education workers, have tended to be union or branch 'nominees', able and willing merely to receive and communicate information. Emerging in such a manner, these stewards have inevitably developed a degree of dependence upon other union officers for the fulfilment of many steward tasks. Whether this figure was a branch officer or a full-time union officer depended upon a number of factors, many of which have already been noted; namely, branch structure, branch officer field of employment, branch officer and full-time officer attitudes, particularly their willingness to accept, nurture or reduce steward dependence. Certainly it was clear that a conscious effort was needed by either branch or full-time officers to break what could become a 'vicious circle of dependence' amongst certain occupational stewards - initial dependence inhibiting the development of the experience and ability needed to become independent.

CONCLUSIONS

The 1950s and 1960s were the era of the strong factory-based steward organization in parts of manufacturing industry. These years of full employment witnessed the 'balance of power tilting in favour of labour, with this greater bargaining power being channeled into the workplace' (Goodman and Whittingham, 1973:158). The preoccupation of both policy-makers

and academics with the private manufacturing sector and particularly the engineering and motor vehicle industries was reflected in the type of 'workplace problems' identified at the time and in the focus of concern, the observations and recommendations of the Donovan Commission (1968).

The 'engineering paradigm' of workplace organization which had its roots in this period, has largely continued to hold sway in the realms of academic research and policy-making. This dominance has continued despite the economic recession of the later 1970s which saw a shift in the 'balance of power' away from labour, and despite observations (Willman, 1980; Brown, 1981; Terry, 1982) that new forms of 'sponsored' steward organization have been emerging in both the manufacturing sector and in other sectors of the economy. The absence of detailed research into these new forms of workplace organization has been accompanied by stagnation in the analytical and theoretical approaches adopted to the study of workplace organization. Knowledge of the structure and especially the dynamics of recently developed workplace organization has remained limited and, partly as a consequence, the data base upon which comparisons could be made between this form of organization and the 'traditional' engineering organization has been inadequate.

This study of recent workplace organization amongst local authority manual workers has a number of important implications. These can be divided into two broad categories: 'academic implications' and 'policy implications'. The 'academic implications' highlight the need for a resassessment of the assumption upon which the 'engineering paradigm' of workplace organization has been based. Such a reassessment is necessary not only to facilitate analysis of major sectors of the economy, such as private and public service sectors, which in the past have been largely ignored by researchers, but

also to provide a greater understanding of workplace organization in the engineering industry itself as well as other industries comprising the private manufacturing sector.

The 'policy implications' specifically relate to the development of workplace organization in the local government sector. Features of the local authority employment context, some of which are unique, set constraints of varying rigidity upon management and trade union behaviour as it affects, both directly and indirectly, workplace organization. These implications become all the more significant in the changing financial context of local government, with the consequent need for changes in manpower levels and employment practices and suggest some limit to the scope for management - and trade union - 'sponsorship' of workplace organization in this sector (Terry, 1982; Taylor, 1978). The final section of this study seeks to consider in detail first the 'academic' and then the 'policy' implications.

The structural features of the local authority employment context have combined to produce a model of workplace organization based upon completely different assumptions to those underpinning the 'engineering paradigm'. The unproblematical nature of personal contact which led Batstone et al (1977) to rely so heavily upon 'networks of contact' in their analysis, can no longer be assumed. The geographical dispersion of local authority workers is of qualitatively different proportions to the dispersion of workers in a factory. The attempt to relate features of steward organization to workforce size without taking into account the geographical disposition and occupational make-up of the workforce, characteristic of the Brown et al (1978) and Warwick (1981) survey work, can no longer be accepted. The existence of local authority occupational

groups in self-contained services is not strictly comparable to the integration of occupational groups within a single factory productive process.

A model of workplace organization based upon the analysis of local authority manual workers would emphasize the following factors:

(i) the work group has only very limited significance for union representation;

(ii) collective bargaining may form only a very small part of shop stewards' activities;

(iii) geographical dispersion inhibits informal interaction between stewards and between stewards and their constituents;

(iv) the diversity of occupational groups employed in relatively self-contained services leads to an inherent and deep-seated tendency towards fragmentation in organization;

(v) the unification of organization necessitates extensive involvement of 'key figures' from the union;

(vi) trade union branch structure and joint union consultative machinery has a significant influence on the shape of workplace organization, encouraging either fragmentation or unity;

(vii) management attitudes are important not only as manifested in the character of joint machinery but more directly as an influence upon steward activities;

(viii) the political/electoral basis of strategic decisions may influence shop steward development and introduce major sources of uncertainty into steward-management relations.

Some of the features of the 'local government model', particularly the political dimension, are unique to the local authority context. Furthermore, there is little to be gained from comparing two models of organization based upon very different assumptions using terms such as 'strength' and 'weakness', 'unity' and 'fragmentation', which clearly have very different connotations within each. Nevertheless, there are elements in the 'local government model' which may be of value outside of the local government sphere. In particular, this model highlights the limits of approaches adopted by previous researchers and the ossification, setting-in from the 1960s, of their analytical frameworks.

The model is directly relevant to those employment contexts characterized by the geographical dispersion of the workforce, the occupational diversity of the workforce in self-contained services or productive processes, and where there is very limited scope for work group regulation of terms and conditions of employment. There is evidence of workplace organization developing in a number of industries sharing all or some of these characteristics, but such organization appears to have escaped detailed analysis. In the private service sector, banking and retail distribution are examples of industries characterized by the employment of small groups of workers who have little scope to regulate their conditions of work, in relatively dispersed and isolated establishments. In the public service sector research is clearly needed into two major groups; health service workers and civil servants. The militancy of both groups of workers in recent years may be indicative of a pre-existing level of workplace organization; it may also have served, as in local government, to stimulate further developments.

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The employment context of health service ancillary workers in particular is similar in a number of respects to that of the local authority manual workers. Indeed, there have been some interesting parallel developments in industrial relations between the two.[12] Health service ancillary workers are predominantly part-time females involved in semi- or unskilled occupations, a number of which are identical to those in local government. In addition, many of the services will be self-contained, as is the case with the provision of hospital meals, cleaning, laundering and portering. Furthermore, these workers will be dispersed throughout an area health authority in different establishments, working alongside very different types of employees from a range of bargaining units. In the civil service as well, the workforce is divided both geographically and particularly institutionally. Workers are divided vertically through attachment to different grades and occupations and horizontally through their placement in different departments.

It has been suggested that the 'local government model' of workplace organization and the 'engineering paradigm', being based upon completely different sets of assumptions, are not strictly comparable. Nevertheless, there are features of the former which are of some relevance in the private manufacturing sector and which indicate the need to ask new kinds of questions. This becomes clearer if attention focuses upon the occupational diversity and geographical dispersion of workforces in the private manufacturing factory. A range of occupational groups will invariably be employed within a single factory and, although they will often be integrated into a single production process, questions still need to be asked about underlying tensions between occupational groups, the potential for fragmentation, particularly where there is product differentiation in a single plant, the

means employed to articulate occupational group interests and the manner in which unity is maintained. Similarly, while a number of writers have pointed out that different production technologies can influence the dispersion of workers and the possibility of contact between them even within the confines of the factory (Sayles, 1958; Hill, 1974), they have concentrated mainly upon work group formation and activity. Despite the observation that differences in the structure of steward organization are very limited within the private manufacturing sector once workforce size has been taken into account (Brown et al, 1978; Brown, 1981), it remains interesting to consider how the dynamics of workplace organization might vary with different manufacturing industries. There is, in short, a clear need for research which focuses upon how the structure of the workforce and the nature of the work process influence workplace organization.

The limited scope for work group activity in the 'local government model' may also have become of greater relevance to the private manufacturing sector during the recent recession. There have been remarkably few attempts to study how the change in the 'balance of power' at the workplace may have influenced the scope for work group regulation of terms and conditions of employment and how, as a consequence, the activities of stewards may have changed. For example, has this change undermined steward-supervisor bargaining; has it become more difficult for stewards to protect 'custom and practice'; has the frontier of management control advanced considerably at this level; and has, as a result, the 'engineering steward' come to resemble the steward of the 'local government model', concerned more with grievances, problems, and the communication of information than with bargaining?

The model of workplace organization developed in this study is of a qualitatively different kind to those previously developed. It is a model which may be of value in understanding many of the newer forms of workplace organization emerging amongst large groups of workers. At a broader level, it is hoped that the very distinctiveness of the model may prompt researchers to reappraise their approaches to the study of workplace organization, encouraging them to focus upon a wider range of industries and to ask new types of questions.

Turning to a consideration of the 'policy implications', it needs to be stressed that the structure of an authority, as characterized by the functions it performs, its geographical size and urban-rural balance, places important constraints upon union and management behaviour. These structural features will vary significantly according to authority type. Whilst it is not being suggested that as a consequence identical forms of workplace organization will emerge in the same type of authority, it does appear that the scope for independent union and management action may be bound within firmly established limits. The questions which need to be addressed in order to gain some insight into future policy options open to the unions and management in their dealings with workplace organization relate to the power of these constraints; how much freedom remains within them and how likely is it that they can be overcome?

The employment context of the local authority ensures the geographical dispersion and isolation of workers and stewards. This inhibits the spontaneous emergence of workplace organization from within the workforce and, if such organization is to emerge, necessitates a considerable degree of

outside union intervention exercised either by local full-time or lay officials. Significant scope exists within lower tier, district authorities for this form of union encouragement or 'sponsorship' and, indeed, it has manifested itself in the development of steward representation and steward interaction. Certainly differences in services provided by shire and non-shire districts and London Boroughs will determine the occupational homogeneity or heterogeneity of the workforce, influencing the likelihood of unity or fragmentation of workplace organization at the authority level. Even so, the relative compactness of most of these authorities allows the development of organization which mirrors the shape of the authority. In the upper tier authorities, and particularly non-metropolitan counties, the geographical size of the authority and the difficulties faced in moving around it, given the limited development of infrastructures and public transport systems, places major restrictions on the free exercise of union influence.

An illuminating example of the constraints placed upon union influence by the structure of different types of authority has been the attempt made by NUPE to reorganize its branch structure. The development of district branches, mirroring the districts created by local government reorganization in 1974, maintained the significance of the branch in the appointment of stewards, in the handling of authority issues and as a focus for steward interaction. However, in basing branches upon the district, county council workers appear to have been forgotten; they have been allotted to the district branch within the relevant part of the county , giving them few opportunities to meet on a county -wide basis.

NUPE's attempt to rectify this situation in 1982 by recommending the creation of county council shop steward committees, is a move of some importance. The emergence of such a committee will provide an opportunity for issues of authority-wide concern to be discussed and may encourage the emergence of an 'authority perspective' amongst stewards. Furthermore, it will no longer be possible for management to dismiss the officeholders of such a committee as unrepresentative, increasing the likelihood of their involvement in the regular conduct of industrial relations. However, it remains debatable whether this kind of committee can effectively overcome the barriers presented by authority structure. The time and effort needed to travel to committee meetings will severely limit the regularity with which they can be held and even on those occasions when they are held, attendance might be expected to be fairly low. The findings of this research also suggest that shire counties are very likely to produce the type of stewards least willing or able to overcome the barriers of attendance. The major manual employing services provided by shire counties are education and social services and these produce a workforce composed primarily of part-time females and stewards whose commitment to their role is somewhat questionable.

Management 'sponsorship' is generally more likely in district councils, although it can be suggested more precisely that of the lower tier authorities, shire districts are most open to this form of management influence. The distinctive organization of the personnel function in shire districts identified by Hinnings and Walsh (1979) amongst the wide range of personnel practices in other authorities is closely related to the structure of the authority. The generally limited size of the shire district workforce and more especially, the lack of occupational diversity, help account for the fact that personnel is likely to be a section of the Chief Executive's Department and highly centralized with no designated departmental personnel officers.

Terry's emphasis on the importance of management in sponsoring the activities of an authority level 'key steward' in order to facilitate the achievement of certain of its objectives must be placed in the context of these observations. The centralization of personnel power, and the possibility of exerting that power at an authority level over a workforce which is small and homogeneous, facilitated purposeful management encouragement of steward organization in Terry's shire districts and it may well facilitate it in other authorities of this type.

The exercise of management power and particularly personnel power in this manner is likely to be a far more complex process in other types of authority with larger and more diversified workforces. The decentralization of personnel, with designated departmental officers, may provide an opportunity for mangement to encourage steward organization within particular parts of the workforce rather than across the workforce at the authority level. It is more likely, given the Hinnings and Walsh observation that personnel management in local government is often conducted in a rather 'confused' manner, with council officers low in the management hierarchy carrying out many of the personnel functions, that steward 'sponsorship' will depend on the relationship between departmental line and staff management. Personnel officers, lacking the power in their own right, might need to persuade line managers of the benefits to be gained from steward 'sponsorship'. Alternatively, such 'sponsorship' may be dependent upon line managers recognizing the benefits by themselves.

A further element of unpredictability in the management process, unique to local government, is the possible involvement and influence of locally elected politicians. The successful distancing of councillors from

the handling of detailed personnel issues, which was achieved in Terry's authorities, gives management the opportunity of deciding whether to integrate stewards into the decision-making process solely on the basis of expediency; that is, whether this is likely to facilitate or impede the achievement of management objectives. However, consultative and negotiating procedures, as well as the geographical proximity of councillors to council officers, may limit the ability of management to distance councillors in such a manner. Failure in such distancing may result in the encroachment of party political and ideological considerations into this sphere. Thus, Labour councils might seek steward encouragement regardless of its effect on the achievement of management objectives, while Conservative Councils might be unwilling to pay the price of a more developed steward organization even if it is compatible with predictable and efficient labour practices.

The party political complexion of the council, which is related rather more tentatively with authority type than other structural features, also becomes important when consideration is given to the likely impact of increasing financial constraints upon management and union behaviour. The attempt by central government to impose the discipline of the market upon local authorities through a range of financial devices can never be completely successful while councillors retain a degree of decision-making power. The decision as to whether to 'hive-off' services to contractors, which cannot possibly escape council sanction, still remains significantly related to the political colour of the authority. Certainly Labour councils have undertaken feasibility studies into the use of contractors but as yet they have used these studies as threats to stimulate changes in work practices. Although similar threats have been used to produce change in Conservative authorities,

privatization can and has been employed not so much as a move of the last resort but as a fulfilment of a positively held party principle.

These party political differences introduce an important element of unpredictability into the employment context of the manual worker. This is particularly the case where finely balanced councils create the potential for electoral change. In the face of attempts to make manpower savings the major question to be asked is whether workplace organization at its vulnerable infancy stage can survive. Paradoxically, Terry's work implies that steward organization may be strengthened by financial constraints as management are forced to encourage steward activities to achieve their objectives. Indeed, the need to defend the identifiable block of manual services counterposed against the services provided by teachers, administrative workers, firemen and policemen, may encourage a significant degree of unity at the authority level. However, the block will comprise a number of self-contained and independent services with the result that as financial constraints tighten pressure on steward organization is likely to increase.

As selective cuts have to be made amongst manual services, workplace organization is likely to fragment as stewards seek to protect their own members. The somewhat artificial growth in steward numbers stimulated by outside union representatives is further likely to weaken the ability of stewards to protect their organization. Stewards with questionable commitment to their role may withdraw even further from their union activities. A concerted attempt by the unions to increase the training of inexperienced stewards may encourage greater resilience, but what is perhaps even more depressing from a union viewpoint, is their relative impotency in the face of cuts. Many stewards will simply be unable to act in a defensive manner.

Some will be dispersed and isolated not only from one another but from their own members as well. The effectiveness of previously powerful groups such as the refuse workers will be significantly undermined by the threat of privatization. The services least at risk from wholesale contracting out, the social services, are ironically the least well organized by the unions.

The cumulative effects of financial constraints which have prompted management attempts to achieve manpower savings, seriously threaten to undermine the fragile basis of workplace organization in many local authorities. The possible integration of one or two 'key' stewards into management processes may well be matched by the withdrawal of many stewards from active union involvement. The long established steward organizations of the private manufacturing sector have faced the pressures of recession since the mid-1970s, the next few years will test the survival powers of newly emerged workplace organization. Can unified workplace organization develop in such circumstances or is it more likely that unity will be undermined and fragmentation reinforced?

NOTES

1. This chapter is based primarily upon information drawn from the four case study authorities. However, data collected from a wider range of authorities, listed in Chapter 3, will also be used as supporting evidence.

2. Although refuse gangs operating from depots did not form the basis for steward representation, it was still apparent that many acted as cohesive units seeking to regulate terms and conditions of employment. This was particularly in evidence where attempts were made to organize work, within prescribed limits, in order to maximise bonus earnings. The study was only concerned with the integration of refuse gangs into union organization but clearly work group behaviour of this kind amongst selective types of local authority workers is an area of potential interest to researchers.

3. A further interesting example of the full-time officer acting as a catalyst was amongst the parks workers of Richmond. The reluctance of these workers to elect stewards was countered by a series of staggered meetings within different parks, addressed by the full-time officer and culminating in the election of a steward.

4. It was interesting to note that in Oxford City, also a shire district, an almost identical pattern of representation to that in Crawley was found, This lends some support to the contention that the avenues along which representatives tend to develop may be determined by authority type.

5. The less detailed information gained from other London Boroughs indicated fairly regular steward interaction at authority level.

6. Again care is needed in generalizing on the basis of Hackney and Crawley. Both of these authorities were 'solidly working class' and dominated by Labour. Whether similar councillor attitudes would have been forthcoming in Labour authorities where the social backgrounds of councillors differed and where the council was more finely balanced, is open to debate.

7. Of the nineteen authorities studied, in only one, Oxford City, had management recognized a full-time steward.

8. Tower Hamlets provided another interesting example of a joint body originally created to handle the introduction of bonus schemes becoming a permanent body and broadening to consider a wide range of issues.

9. Many of these stewards who were unable to maintain their constituencies would be classified as 'cowboys' under the Batstone et al (1977) typology. Such a label, implying a degree of 'wildness' and irresponsibility, is perhaps an unfortunate one to apply. The working conditions of many local authority manual occupational groups were clearly biased against the steward being able to act as a delegate or to rigorously pursue 'union principles'. The isolation and dispersal of members forced the steward to act as a representative in dealings with management and severely inhibited the development of worker unity and a 'collective consciousness', intrinsic to the 'pursuit of union principles'.

10. Further weight is lent to this argument by the later introduction of schemes for certain groups of education and social service workers. 'Where there's a will there's a way', and greater bargaining power amongst such groups may have forced management to design schemes at an earlier date.

11. Most London Boroughs, Labour and Conservative, have Joint Works Committees where worker representatives meet directly with councillors.

12. The pay and conditions of local authority manual and national health service ancillary workers were covered by the same report of the National Board for Prices and Incomes. This report (No.29) noted the similarities between the two groups of workers 'in their wage rates and earnings, in their proportions of lower paid workers, in their low levels of productivity, and in the 'number of women they employ' (p.29). Many of the NBPI recommendations, particularly the need to introduce incentive bonus schemes, also covered both sets of workers. Formal recognition of stewards was relatively late in the NHS as in local government, coming in 1971. The continuing low levels of earnings for both groups of workers have forced them into unity during 'low pay campaigns' and in the 'Winter of Discontent', 1978-79, industrial action was simultaneous.

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APPENDIX I

National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Services (Manual Workers)

Trade Union Side		Employers' Side	
GMWU	12 seats	AMA	7 seats
TGWU	9 seats	ACC	6 seats
NUPE	9 seats	Provincial Councils	20 seats
		Scottish Council	4 seats
	30 seats		41 seats

APPENDIX II

Code of Guiding Principles and Practice for Work Study Based Incentive Schemes for Local Authorities' Services (Manual Workers)

Introduction

(1) The National Council has emphasised to local authorities the benefits to be gained both by employers and employees from the application of soundly based bonus schemes and has urged authorities to introduce such schemes. Wherever possible and practicable incentive schemes in local authorities should be based on accepted work study principles: this Code is for the use of authorities during the design, implementation and operation of such schemes.

(2) Nothing in this Code should be regarded as diminishing the established right of the local authority, as management:

(i) to adopt appropriate means of ensuring poper planning and to develop and introduce new methods, techniques and equipment as part of the every day business of good management;

(ii) to expect of each employee reasonable output of work of good quality to the authority's satisfaction.

Definitions

(3) Generally throughout this Code the British Standards Institution "Glossary of Terms used in Work Study" is used as the reference for the definition of terms used.

Consultation and Participation

(4) (i) For the successful operation of work study and incentive schemes there should be close consultation between local authority, its employees and the trade unions. Consultation can also frequently be the means whereby very worthwhile contributions are made by those on the job to the development of improved methods.

(ii) The National Council has reached agreement on a procedure which states that local authorities should appoint local joint pay and productivity/efficiency committees representative of members, chief officers and employees with the objective of considering:

(a) opportunities for effecting savings through changes in method and improvement in the use of labour and resources;

(b) ways and means so to do and thus increase earnings opportunities.

Such a committee should familiarize itself with:

(a) the basic principles of productivity/ efficiency schemes;

(b) the scope for schemes;

(c) progress which has been made elsewhere.

The committee's discussions should be meaningful and exhaustive. There should be joint studies involving management, supervisors and workers and there should be the fullest interchange of ideas.

(iii) During the investigations which precede the introduction of changes (e.g. method study and work measurement) and thereafter, representatives of the employees and their trade unions should be invited to join the investigating team, to act on behalf of the employees in discussions with management on the design of the schemes and be available to attend, examine and carry out any checks. Such representatives should be trained in general work study.

(iv) Day to day problems should be resolved by normal contact between chief officers, supervisors, work study officers, employees and trade union representatives.

(v) Neither the joint working nor the employees' representatives replace the normal negotiating machinery at national, provincial and local level.

Redundancy

(5). (i) It is the responsibility of the local authority to organize the work so that it is done efficiently by the best and most economic methods and to use such management techniques as it may consider desirable. Work study investigations may lead to a reduction in the number of employees required for specific work; where such reduction occurs, an employee released should be found comparable alternative work in the same authority. A close liaison between staff conducting investigations and staff responsible for recruitment can be valuable and save much individual hardship. Early consultation with the trade unions is also essential.

(ii) Where the introduction of a scheme is inhibited by the prospects of inability to absorb surplus labour through normal wastage or alternative employment, advice should be sought from the Scottish Council or Provincial Council, as appropriate.

Procedure

(6) (i) A local authority contemplating the introduction of work study should, before commissioning a preliminary survey, notify the appropriate trade union. The authority will probably wish to arrange for a preliminary survey to provide the following information:

(a) the benefits to be expected from the investigation;

(b) the terms of reference for the investigation team;

(c) the cost of the investigation;

(d) the expected annual overhead costs of maintenance and additional administration where required.

(ii) Before any investigation starts an initial meeting shall be held with the employees concerned and the trade unions to explain the procedure. A similar meeting should be held before any changes are made (e.g. the introduction of incentives) to explain the changes.

(iii) Appreciation courses on work study, organization and method or incentive schemes should be arranged for those concerned at the various levels i.e. departmental officers, supervisors and employees.

(iv) Where an incentive scheme is being introduced the conditions of the scheme are described in a work specification. This is normally in two parts:

Part 1 - general conditions applying to all schemes

Part 2 - conditions particular to the one scheme and including:

A description of the methods used.
The rate of bonus.
Standard or allowed times for that scheme.
Special conditions regarding safeguards, quality and safe working.
An example of the bonus calculation.

(v) A copy of the preliminary survey and of any scheme shall be supplied to the trade unions.

(vi) To enable all concerned to gain experience in the running of a scheme it may be introduced for a trial period (say up to 6 months). Thereafter it will become the normal and agreed conditions of work in the authority and subject to review at the request of either side.

Relationship of Pay to Performance for Directly Proportional and Stabilized Incentive Schemes

(7) (i) The rate of bonus for standard performance (100 BSI or its

equivalent) shall be equivalent to one third of the basic rate of pay, as defined for bonus purposes. The basic rate of pay is the national, provincial or local agreed rate for the job, including any plus rate for extra skills or responsibility and, where appropriate, service supplement. Performance may be calculated:

(a) on an individual basis;

(b) in circumstances of 'natural group', trade or teams working on a group basis.

(ii) The type of scheme will be dependent upon many factors. Although the most satisfactory scheme is one where the earnings potential of an employee is directly under his control and related to his individual output, the number of occasions where this is practicable, possible or economic is very limited and most schemes are of a group or team nature, with earnings related to the performance of the group or team.

(iii) Generally, bonus should not be payable in respect of performance below 75 BSI (or its equivalent) but in those instances where such performance cannot be obtained initially bonus payments may be made for an interim period to be negotiated locally for performance from 50 BSI (or its equivalent).

(iv) Stabilized schemes may be introduced in those cases where a conventional directly proportional scheme is inappropriate.

(v) Fixed tasks schemes should operate on a directly proportional payment curve with the payment level being dependent upon the performance level operating under the scheme.

(vi) It may be necessary to agree that in the interest of quality, safety and general welfare of employees and to prevent damage of plant, equipment, etc., there should be a limitation on bonus earnings.

Time not on Bonus, Lost Time and Unmeasured Work

(8) (i) Bonus is paid as in the work specification for measured work (i.e. work for which targets have been set).

(ii) It may not be possible to work on bonus all the time but it is implicit in a bonus scheme based on work study that work which is not measured, and lost time shall be kept to a minimum.

(iii) Lost time occurs when a man (or team) is prevented from working for a period of ten minutes or more. Bonus is not paid for lost time.

(iv) Unmeasured work is work for which targets have not been set. Bonus is paid for unmeasured work only in the following circumstances, subject to satisfactory standards of output being achieved.

(a) Where, after a reasonable settling period, the percentage of unmeasured work with a measured scheme rises to a level which seriously affects bonus earnings, no bonus will be paid for the first six hours (or 15% of the normal working week of a part-time employee) of unmeasured work in time which would ordinarily have been measured work, but for such time in excess of six hours the employee should be paid average bonus per attendance hour.

(b) Where work is not appropriate for measurement because:

(1) of the extremely variable work content;

(2) it has unusual characteristics e.g. a "one off" situation;

(3) it falls outside the scope of Part 2 specification

and occurs so infrequently that it would be uneconomic or impracticable to devote time to measurement; an employee should be paid his average bonus per attendance hour for all hours on such work.

(v) So that bonus already earned may not be lost, all unmeasured work and lost time is recorded on the work sheet with the times of starting and stopping on each occasion. Times will be certified by the supervisor concerned and will be paid at the basic hourly rate of the operative concerned. It is the responsibility of each operative to notify his supervisor as soon as possible when he is prevented from working.

(vi) Where an authority sends on a course of training an employee whose pay is related to a bonus scheme, he should be paid an allowance during the course equal to the average amount of his bonus earnings, the calculation of the allowance is left to local arrangement.

(vii) Where an employee whose pay is related to a bonus scheme is called for jury service he is to be paid an allowance during the period of the service equal to the average amount of bonus normally earned.

(viii) In respect of paid holidays the bonus earner shall be paid a sum equal to his average bonus earnings, this being determined by reference to the average bonus earned per hour over the preceding three months, or any other method or any other period agreed locally.

(ix) Bonus is not payable for absence through sickness or injury.

Calculation and Payment of Bonus

(9) (i) Bonus is earned on all work for which standard time or temporary targets have been compiled in terms of work values, which are expressed in standard minutes or hours. In some schemes the work values may be expressed as allowed minutes.

(ii) The method of calculating bonus and the bonus scale will be shown in the Part 2 specification.

(iii) Bonus is calculated daily or weekly and paid weekly, normally one or two weeks in arrear.

Revision of Values

(10) The local authority may investigate methods, degree of specialization, materials, equipment and working conditions with the object of introducing improvements. Targets will be altered at the request of either side after consultation where there is:

(a) a change in method, degree of specialization, materials, equipment or working conditions;

(b) an error or miscalculation.

Any proposed changes will be explained to all concerned through the established procedure.

Work Recording

(11) Each employee and/or team leader will complete and sign a work sheet in sufficient detail to enable the work content to be calculated. Details recorded on the work sheet will be countersigned by a supervisor before bonus earnings are calculated.

Source: Local Authorities' Services (Manual Workers) Schedule of Wages and Working Conditions.

APPENDIX III

National Group Classifications

GROUP A

Car Park Attendant (Light Duty)
Chair Attendant Class II
Cleaner
Dining Room Assistant (SM)
Domestic Assistant Class I (R)
Lamp Lighter
Lavatory Attendant
Messenger
School Cleaner

GROUP B

Bath Attendant
Car Park Labourer
Chair Attendant Class I, taking cash
Domestic Assistant Class II (R)
General Labourer
Laundryman/woman (B & R)
Lavatory Cleaner (mobile)
Paper and Salvage Baler (Hand Press)
Park Attendant Class II
Porter
Public Lighting Attendant
Road Labourer
School Meals Supervisor Assistant
Street Sweeper
School Crossing Patrol

GROUP C

Assistant Gardener/Arborist/Nurseryman
Destructor Labourer
Domestic Assistant Class II (R)
Driver of Pedestrian Controlled Sweeping Machine
Establishment Laundry Attendant/Operator (simple operations) (B)
Groundsman's Assistant
Laundrette Attendant

Laundry Machine Operator
Lavatory Attendant, taking cash
Paper and Salvage Baler (Mechanical Press)
Park Attendant Class I
Receiving Hopper Attendant (Salvage Plant)
Salvage Picker (Destructor Plant Screen Room)
Stoker (other than Destructor Stoker)

GROUP D

Abattoir Labourer
Assistant Cook (SM & R)
Car Park Attendant, taking cash
Cesspool Empyting Machine Attendant
Destructor Stoker
Domestic Assistant Class III (R)
Driver of self propelled roller (steerable) up to 50 cwts.
Driver of a vehicle not requiring a heavy goods vehicle driver's licence.
Driver of a wheel tractor with trailer, front bucket and simple equipment.
Establishment Laundry Machine Operator (more complex operation)
General Roadman
Gully Pump Attendant
Pool Attendant (not qualified by Bronze Medallion)
Public Laundry Attendant
Public Laundry Washing Machine Operator
Sewer Flusher or Jetting Machine Attendant
Sewerman
Tip Attendant (Controlled Tip)

GROUP E

Arborist
Assistant Cook (R)
Crematorium Assistant
Driver of Gully-emplying Machine
Driver of a Mechanical Sweeper up to and including 2 cu.yds. capacity
Driver of Road Swilling and Sewer Flushing Machine
Gardener
Groundsman
Nurseryman
Pail Closet/Night Soil Man

Laundry Machine Operator
Lavatory Attendant, taking cash
Paper and Salvage Baler (Mechanical Press)
Park Attendant Class I
Receiving Hopper Attendant (Salvage Plant)
Salvage Picker (Destructor Plant Screen Room)
Stoker (other than Destructor Stoker)

GROUP D

Abattoir Labourer
Assistant Cook (SM & R)
Car Park Attendant, taking cash
Cesspool Empyting Machine Attendant
Destructor Stoker
Domestic Assistant Class III (R)
Driver of self propelled roller (steerable) up to 50 cwts.
Driver of a vehicle not requiring a heavy goods vehicle driver's licence.
Driver of a wheel tractor with trailer, front bucket and simple equipment.
Establishment Laundry Machine Operator (more complex operation)
General Roadman
Gully Pump Attendant
Pool Attendant (not qualified by Bronze Medallion)
Public Laundry Attendant
Public Laundry Washing Machine Operator
Sewer Flusher or Jetting Machine Attendant
Sewerman
Tip Attendant (Controlled Tip)

GROUP E

Arborist
Assistant Cook (R)
Crematorium Assistant
Driver of Gully-emplying Machine
Driver of a Mechanical Sweeper up to and including 2 cu.yds. capacity
Driver of Road Swilling and Sewer Flushing Machine
Gardener
Groundsman
Nurseryman
Pail Closet/Night Soil Man

Pool Attendant (qualified by Bronze Medallion)
Public Lighting Maintenance Attendant
Refuse Collector (Ashbinman, Dustman)
Roadman, Driver (including Tractor Driver) or Sewerman
Stoker (steam)

GROUP F

Cook (SM & R)
Crematorium Attendant
Driver/Plant Operator
Skilled Roadman
Skilled Sewerman
Pest Control Operative

GROUP G

Cook-in-Charge (R)
Heavy Driver/Plant Operator
Public Lighting Fitter and Erector
Specialist Roadman
Specialist Sewerman

Abbreviations:
(B) Swimming Pools, Baths and Laundries
(R) Residential Establishments
(SM) School Meals, Staff Canteens and Day Nurseries

Source: Local Authorities' Services (manual workers) Schedule of Wages and Working Conditions.

APPENDIX IV

Steward Questionnaire

Occupation

What union do you belong to?

Why did you join this union rather than any other?

Have you ever belonged to another union?

How long have you been a member of your present union?

Do you hold any other offices in your union? How long have you held it or them?

How long have you been a steward?

Why did you become a steward?

Did you have a predecessor? If yes why did he/she leave the post?

Where were you elected? Who elected you? Were you opposed?

Are you re-elected? How often?

How many workers do you represent?

How many of them are part-time and how many full-time?

Are they in the same establishment/depot/office?

Are they from the same section/division/department?

Has the shape of your constituency changed since you became steward? If yes why?

Do you have any difficulty maintaining contact with members?

Do you think they have any difficulty maintaining contact with you?

How do you maintain contact with members?

Do you ever have meetings of members? When and how often?

Outside of meetings with other stewards are you personally in contact with any stewards?

If yes who and how regular is such contact and for what reason does it take place?

Outside of branch meetings and consultative/negotiating committee meetings do you have any meetings of groups of stewards?

If yes, whose is involved, when and how often are such meetings held?

How often do you attend branch meetings?

What value do branch meetings have to you?

How often are you in contact with the branch secretary?

Why do you go to him?

How accessible is he?

Are there occasions when all stewards from the branch meet? If yes do you attend?

What is discussed at these meetings?

Of what value are these meetings to you?

Are you ever in contact with a full-time local union officer?

If yes, how often and for what reason?

What role do you think the full-time officer should play in the authorities affairs?

What do you think the stewards role is?

Have you received any training or instruction as a steward? If yes who from?

What kinds of problems do members come to you with?

Do certain types of problems arise more frequently than others?

Who is your first line supervisor?

What problem can you settle with he or she?

Do you regard yourself as a negotiator?

Can you negotiate with your first line supervisor?

What other council officers do you have contact with?

How often and for what reason?

How effective are these officers in settling your members' problems?

Are you satisfied with your ability to settle your members problems?

Are you a member of a consultative or negotiating committee?

What value are these committees to you?

How effective are they?

Do you think there are any differences in the way Conservative and Labour councillors treat their employees? If yes what differences?

Have you ever been in contact with a councillor outside of committees? If yes for what reason?

Before the national dispute of 1978-79 had you or your members been involved in any industrial action?

If yes could you explain the form it took, the reasons for it and the outcome?

During the 1978-79 national dispute did you and your members take part in the Day of Action on 22nd January?

After that day was any action taken? If yes what form did it take and how long was it taken for?

Since that national dispute have you and your members been involved in any industrial action? If yes explain the form it took, the reasons for it and the outcome?